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THE SACRED SHRINE.

BY CHAPE MYRTLE.

Every human heart hath its mystery,
Motives, to itself unknown,
Till the life's revealing history
Thrills it with a warning tone;
Full of memories, dear and olden,
Lies a little casket golden,
Barred in its native mine,
Hidden deep, and opened only
When the heart is sad and lonely;
Is that sacred shrine.

Duly then the seal is broken,
And alone we fondly gaze
On each word and tender token
Left by friends of other days;
Then their presence hath a seeming
More of touch than blissful dreaming
To the earnest, tearful eyes
That so gaze, with saddened pleasure,
Counting o'er and o'er each treasure
Till the past before us rises.

Till the heart's deep echoes ring,
Give us back Love's tender words,
And again we hear the singing
Of Hope's golden-plumed birds;
And the weary heart is strengthened,
For its life-path lone, and lengthened
By their ever joyous hymn,
And the spirit seemeth numbered
With the souls that are incumbered
Nevermore with shadows dim.

The Detective's Ward:

OR,
THE FORTUNES OF A BOWERY GIRL.

BY AGILE PENNE.

AUTHOR OF "ORPHAN NELL, THE ORANGE GIRL,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

IN "THE DIVE."

WITH the keen-edged knife glittering in his hand, the Italian, mad with rage, rushed toward the girl.

The rough, seated on the table, and the woman, leaning on the bar, looked on calmly, without stirring a finger to protect the girl, or to save her from the death that seemed so near.

But, as the Italian struck at her, with the quickness of a cat, she jumped to one side, thus evading the murderous stroke. And, as the Italian turned, as if to repeat the rush, she caught up a chair, which stood near at hand. With a strength which one would not have suspected to have dwelt in her slight frame, she whirled the chair over her head and brought it down with terrible force upon the Italian. Jocky threw up his arms to guard his head. The force of the blow hurled him headlong to the floor; but little injured though, for his arms had saved his skull.

The girl then retreated a few steps, still grasping the chair in her hands; still prepared for another attack.

"Set 'em up ag'in!" cried Rocky, in huge delight. "Round two; the old 'un goes to grass. Round three; time!"

But the Italian slowly rose to his feet, and showed but little inclination to again renew the attack. The desperation of the girl astonished him.

"Diavolo! you have broke my head!" he cried, in anger.

"Why don't you let me alone, now?" exclaimed the maid, still keeping herself prepared for another assault. Her face deadly white, and the full, red lips shut tightly together.

"Time, Jocky!" shouted the rough; "you ain't a-goin' to 'give it up so, Mr. Brown,' are you?"

"You better let me alone!" the girl cried, her eyes flashing, and her whole manner showing the desperation born of despair.

"Go for her, Jocky!" Rocky exclaimed. "Are you going for to let a girl back you down? Pretty sort of a rooster, you are! I wouldn't bet my stamps on you, now." The rough was disgusted, and expressed his feelings in his tone.

"Put down ze chair, you imp of ze devil!" the Italian cried, cautiously advancing toward the still defiant girl.

"I won't!" she answered. "I give you fair warning that, if you attempt to strike me, I'll hit you with it again." In the eye of the girl the Italian read that she would keep her word, or, at least, attempt to do so.

"Come, Jocky, the audience is a-gettin' impatient!" exclaimed the rough. "If you ain't a-goin' to put up your bunch of fives, you'd better throw up the sponge and quit to once. I'd be ashamed for to have a girl back me down, I would!"

"If you no put down ze chair, diavolo! I will kill you!" cried the Italian, fiercely.

"You tried it on once, and you didn't do it!" the girl replied, still defiant. "You better not try it again. You've got my temper up, an' I had just as lief die now as not. This ends you and me. I don't stay here no more!"

The girl made a movement toward the door, but the Italian quickly anticipated her motion and placed himself before it.

"You no go!" he cried, in rage. "Well, now, this is interesting," said the rough, complacently. "Now hit him over the head with the cheer, 'cos you can't git out till you do."

"What! you tell her to hit me over ze head viz ze chair?" cried the Italian, in astonishment.

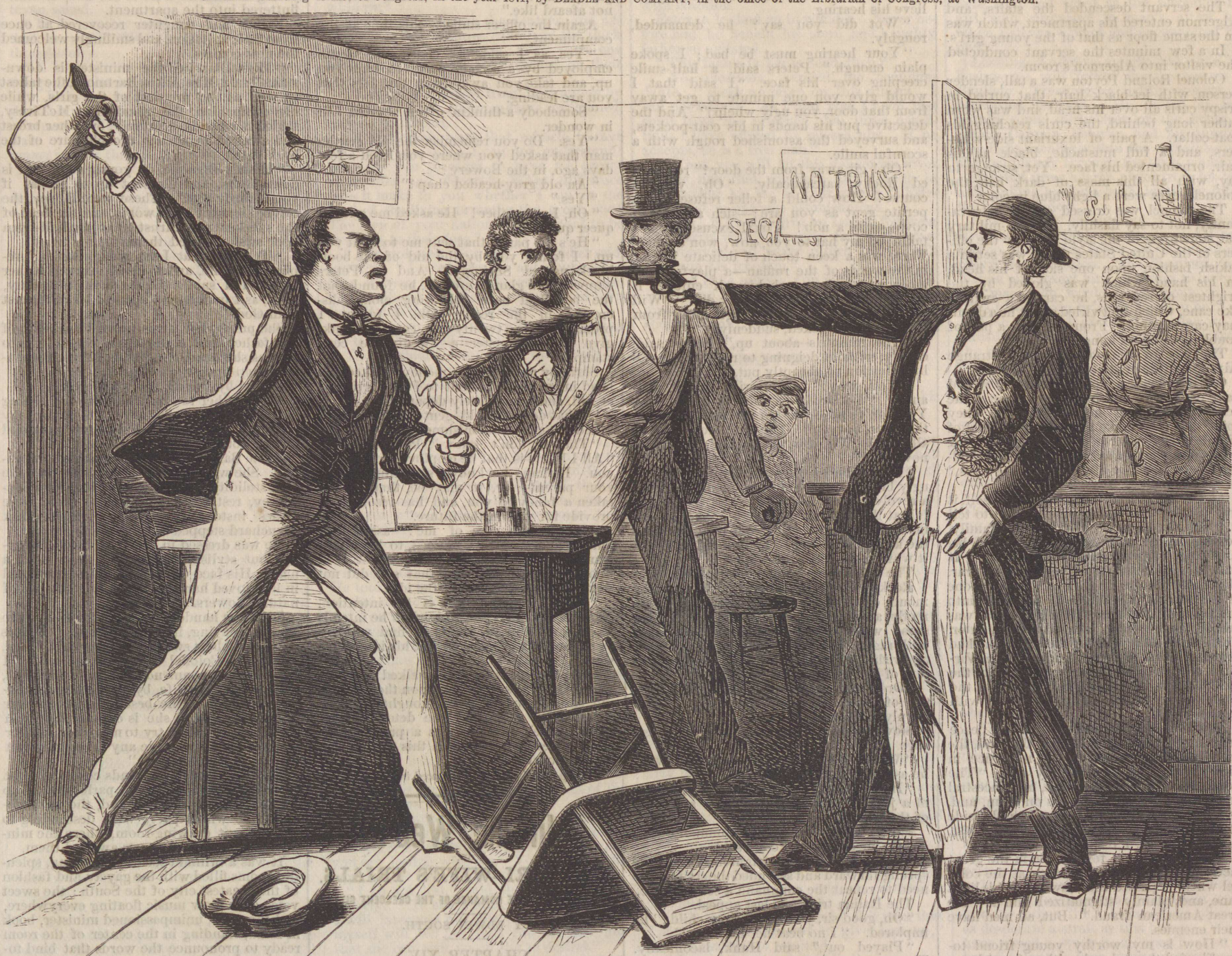
"In course; what a feller you are, for to want to spile the fun!" said the rough, in an aggrieved tone.

"Rocky, I give you one dollar to take ze chair away from this devil's imp!" exclaimed the Italian, glaring upon the girl.

"A dollar! Now you're talkin'. I'm your man!" and Rocky got off the table.

"Don't you dare to come near me!" the maid cried, fiercely, retreating, and placing her back against the wall as she spoke.

"You jes' teach your grandmother to milk



"I'll give you just one minute to get away from that door, my friend," Peters said, calmly, not a trace of agitation in his voice.

ducks," said the rough, with a grin. "You jes' put down that cheer, or I'll walk into you, lively, now. You can't skeer me!" And as he spoke, he slowly approached the girl.

"Keep away!" she cried, every muscle in her body trembling with excitement.

"Take ze chair, den I kill her, some!" exclaimed the Italian.

"Oh, jes' look at me now," said Rocky, shaking his head with a knowing air. "See me astonish her weak nerves."

Then the rough made a sudden dart forward, as if intending to seize the girl. With desperate force she brought the chair down, intending to fell the rough as she had made the Italian seek the floor; but the wily Rocky knew a trick worth two of that, for, as the chair descended, he suddenly darted back and avoided the blow. Then, before she could again raise the clumsy weapon that stern necessity had forced upon her hands, he seized it, wrested it from her hands, and sent it spinning across the floor.

The Italian uttered a shrill cry of triumph. The child was helpless in his hands.

"All done by the turn of the wrist!" exclaimed Rocky. "Old man, I'll trouble you for to fork over that dollar."

With white face, flaming eyes, and lips quivering with passion, the girl stood; her little fists tightly clenched, as though, even now, she was prepared to do battle with her enemies.

The door against which Jocky was standing was opened suddenly. As it turned into the room, the force of the concussion pitched the Italian forward into the saloon.

The girl started with joy. In the appearance of the strangers she saw a chance of escape.

Through the doorway came the two detectives, Peters and Henry, followed by the boot-black, known as Shrimpy.

The keen eye of Peters took in the details of the scene at once. The Italian, with the long, glittering knife in his hand; the girl, pale with passion; and the rough, with an ugly scowl upon his brutal face, produced there by the sudden appearance of the strangers, told plainly that they had entered at an opportune moment.

"Hullo! what's the trouble?" Peters asked, in his quiet way.

"What's that to you?" demanded Rocky, roughly.

"And who trod on you, young man?" asked Peters, knitting his brows.

"See here, we don't want no talk out of you; you jes' git!" cried Rocky, in anger.

"Have you bought your coffin?" asked Hank, stretching his brawny arms out, carelessly, and approaching the rough.

Rocky measured Hank with his eye; took in the muscular power that evidently laid in the well-developed sinews of the detective's powerful frame, and slowly retreated toward the bar, as if in search of a weapon.

"What ze devil you want here, eh?" asked the Italian, in surly anger. He was not pleased with the appearance of the strangers, and guessed that they were intent on mischief.

"Well, our wants are easily explained and easily satisfied," Peters said, quietly. "In the first place we want this girl."

Had a bombshell exploded in that underground saloon it could hardly have created more excitement.

The rough stared; the Italian uttered a fearful oath; the girl took a step forward, with clasped hands, and even the wife of the Italian, behind the counter, manifested some emotion.

"You want zis girl?" the Italian demanded, in wonder.

"That's the programme!" Peters replied, coolly.

"You can't have her!" cried Rocky, defiantly.

"Gorgeous individual, just you keep your oar out until you're asked to row," said the detective, provokingly.

"Look a-here, now; you'll git hurt afore you kin git out of this now!" cried Rocky, in indignant warning.

"I wonder how thick this wall is here?" said Peters, interrogatively. Do you think it would damage it much if you knocked that fellow through it into the next basement?"

"Spose I try," and Hank made a step toward Rocky.

The rough seized the heavy water-pitcher that stood on the counter.

"Now, you jes' keep away!" he cried, in anger.

"You take my child away? Diavolo!" exclaimed the Italian.

"Your child! How long since?" asked Peters, in contempt.

"Oh, don't believe him, sir; I ain't his child!" cried the girl, quickly. "He's called me a beggar's brat every so many times, and jes' as you came in now, he swore he was a-goin' to kill me!"

"She tell one big lie!" exclaimed the Italian.

"Don't you believe him, sir. It ain't a lie; it's the truth, sir!" protested the girl.

Peters took the memorandum-book from his pocket and glanced over the description of the girl he was in search of.

"She answers to it," he muttered. "I say, my girl, did you tell a gentleman on the Bowery a few days ago where you lived?"

"Yes, sir," answered the girl, eagerly.

"Then you're the one I want."

"You want my child! You no take her!" cried the Italian.

"Don't talk so much with your mouth!" said Hank, tersely, to the Italian.

"Don't you let 'em take her away, Jocky!" cried the rough. "Patty piece of business for to take a man's own gal away!"

"Do you want to go with us?" Peters asked, addressing the girl.

"Yes," she answered, eagerly. "I would rather die than stay here. I'll go anywhere with you. Jocky, here, allers beats me, but I made up my mind to-night that he shouldn't beat me any more, and when he tried to, I knocked him down first with my fist, and then with the chair," said the girl, proudly.

Peters looked at her in astonishment. The detective had met with many strange characters in his career; but this girl was something out of the common run of the Arabs of the street.

"She no go!" cried the Italian, fiercely.

"She my child! I no let her go. You take her away I call ze police—put you in ze Tombs, diavolo!"

"That's right; stick to it, Jocky!" said the rough, encouragingly. "Who are these two fellers, I'd like for to know, that come to take away an honest man's girl?"

The Italian had hid his knife away at the commencement of the conversation, and now, with both hands outstretched, he sprang forward as if to seize the girl; but he stopped suddenly in his onward motion, for the girl, with flashing eyes and clenched teeth, drew back her arm as if to strike. The Italian had felt the force of her little knuckles once before and did not care to encounter them again.

At the same moment, Rocky, brandishing the water-pitcher, sprang forward and placed himself before the door, thus barring all exit from the saloon.

CHAPTER V.

THE VIRGINIAN COLONEL.

AFTER the interview with his uncle, Algernon slowly proceeded up-stairs.

The brain of the young man was in a whirl. He could hardly realize that the interview which had just taken place was not all a dream.

"This is really delightful news!" he muttered. "It's a brilliant look-out ahead for me. I've always thought that I was safe to come in for a cool hundred thousand at the least. Oh, this is pleasant!"

At the head of the stairs, he met Miss Blake. She was just coming down as he was going up.

Dorothy Blake, or Dolly Blake, as all in the Olkoff household called her, was a pretty, ladylike girl of two and twenty; a round face, clear red and white complexion, and dark-brown eyes and hair.

"Hullo, Dolly!" cried the young man, "I've some news for you."

"For me?" the girl asked, looking with a pleasant smile into the face of her lover; for that was the position that the young man held in regard to her.

Old Olkoff had made a shrewd guess at the truth.

Dolly Blake and Algernon Olkoff had

been brought up together from childhood. Naturally they had fallen in love with each other.

"Yes," Algernon said, replying to the girl's question. "I've just had a few minutes' talk with my uncle. In the first place, he 'pitched' into me on account of my extravagance, as he calls it, and told me that in the future I mustn't expect any thing from him."

"Oh! how cruel!"

"Well, rather; then he further informed me that he expected his daughter would soon arrive."

"His daughter!" cried Dolly, in astonishment.

"Exactly; you're astonished of course. I know I was," said Algernon, grimly.

"But I never heard him speak of a daughter before!"

"No, nor anybody else. You can judge how astonished I was. But the old gentleman was in sober earnest. His manner told pretty plain that he wasn't joking. So, you see, my nose is out of joint."

"Oh! how dreadful!" and the girl looked, pathetically, into the face of Algernon.

"I should say it was, and then, on the top of this pleasant information, he gave me a bit of advice, and that concerns you."

"Why, what did he say about me?" Dolly asked, in wonder.

"Not much about you, in person," Algernon replied. "He simply told me that I mustn't make love to you."

"I wonder if he suspects that we are engaged?" and a blush mantled the cheeks and forehead of the girl.

"No, but he's evidently afraid that something of that sort will happen."

"What did you say?" Dolly asked, anxiously.

"Nothing; what the deuce could I say. It was bad enough to have him coolly inform me that I needn't expect to inherit any of his fortune, without being warned against falling in love with the girl that I was already engaged to. I was so taken aback, I couldn't say any thing at all!" Algernon said, dismally.

"But, why does he object?"

"Don't ask me! I can't tell you! Some whim that he has taken into his head."

"I feel that when I tell him how much we love each other, he won't object."

"I wouldn't say any thing at present!" Algernon exclaimed, quickly.

Then a ring at the door-bell sounded through the house.

"I think that's some one for me. I expected Colonel Peyton to call this afternoon. He's a deuced clever fellow, and I'll ask his advice in regard to this matter."

"I was going down to sit with your uncle a little while, but I don't feel like it now," Dolly said, with a mournful face. "If he looked at me, I know I should burst out

crying. Come and see me as soon as your visitor goes."

"Yes, I will. I think you had better not let uncle know that I have told you what he said; he might be angry."

"I'll go and shut myself up in my room. Oh, dear, I feel so miserable, Alge. I think that it's real mean for your uncle to object to our loving each other."

Then Dolly retreated quickly, and sought shelter in her room. She cast herself upon the bed with a sigh, and buried her face in the pillow, as though by the act she would blot out the memory of the world and all its cares.

Leaving the girl to her reflections, we will return to Algernon.

The young man stood at the head of the stairs, waiting to see if the servant would ascend with a message to him.

He was not disappointed in his thought, that the visitor was for him, for in a few moments the servant brought him up a card.

On the card was written:

"Colonel Roland Peyton."

"Show him up, James, please—to my room," Algernon said.

The servant descended the stairs, and Algernon entered his apartment, which was on the same floor as that of the young girl's. In a few minutes the servant conducted the visitor into Algernon's room.

Colonel Roland Peyton was a tall, slender person, with jet-black hair, that curled in crisp curls all over his head, and was worn rather long behind, the curls reaching his coat-collar. A pair of luxuriant side-whiskers, and a full mustache, black as his hair, ornamented his face. Yet, strange to say, with all this mass of dark hair, the colonel's eyes were light blue in color.

The colonel was dressed a little extravagantly, not to say flashily. A semi-military hat, something of the style worn by the officers of the United States army, was set in a rakish fashion upon one side of his head. In his hand, which was gloved by the brightest of red kids, he carried a switch-like cane, which he twirled about in a devil-may-care manner. From his neck a pair of double eye-glasses hung.

The face of the colonel was a strange mixture of the gentleman and the bully.

On Broadway a detective officer would have picked him out instantly for one of the gentry "who toil not, neither do they spin," but who make a living by the aid of nimble fingers and a pack of cards. "A gentleman who always aids fortune by holding a good hand, or always throwing sixes," as the French say.

As for the colonel's account of himself it was simple, and he never hesitated to tell it. The son of a wealthy Virginia family, he was reared as a gentleman should be. At the age of twenty he visited Europe. It was just at the time of the Crimean war. He enlisted in the English service—was one of the famous "six hundred" who rode into the jaws of death at Balaklava, and was one of the few who escaped the slaughter. Then, during the war for the Union, he had commanded a regiment under Lee in Virginia, and acted an important part in all the terrible fights which reddened the soil of the "mother of States and statesmen" with human blood.

And now that the white wings of peace once more were spread over the land, the ex-colonel had taken up his residence in New York. As he carelessly said, "The South has gone to the dogs, my ancestral acres won't sell for the taxes on them, and, as I like New York, in future I shall reside at the North. I bear no malice for the past. A noble foe, sir, I respect, by Jove!"

There were some few people in the great metropolis who looked askance at the colonel when he passed them, swinging his light cane, and plainly stigmatized him as "the great American fraud." But, all men have their enemies.

"Now is my worthy young friend today," cried the colonel, with a flourish, as he entered the room.

"I'm feeling duced badly!" replied Algernon.

"Sit down, colonel, and take a cigar."

"Ah, thank you!" The gentleman accepted both the cigar and the chair.

"Ah! there's nothing like a good cigar for enjoyment," he exclaimed, as he lighted the fragrant weed. "I love to watch the perfumed smoke curling, like holy incense, up to heaven!" said the colonel, with a wave of the hand. "But, why does the devil feel ill at ease? Let him confide in his Pythias."

"You know, of course, that I have always expected to become my uncle's heir. I've spoken about it to you."

"You have, many a time and oft, on the Rialto?" said the colonel, theatrically.

"Well, if you had expected all your life to come in some day for about two hundred thousand dollars, and then should suddenly discover that you had about as much chance of it as the man in the moon, wouldn't it rather annoy you?"

"Perhaps, upon some, it would have that effect. When I say some, I mean nearly all the world. But, to a man like myself, you know, who has been used to the ups and downs of fortune, why, it would be a mere trifle. Ah! my dear boy, when, like me, you have rode into the very jaws of death, cannon to the right, and muskets to the left, before you the whole Russian army, you will learn to laugh at such a trifle as the loss of a bit of beggarly money. There was a time when my estates in Virginia brought me in at least thirty thousand dollars a year; and now, I barely receive two thousand. But, I laugh at it. Money! what is it?"

"Fifty hure—the more one has, the more he is troubled to take care of it. But, by the way, explain: what has caused this sudden change in your prospects?"

"You'll never guess!"

"Oh, I rather think I can. I think I'm up to almost everything in this world. But you a bottle of champagne, I guess it the first time!" cried the colonel.

"No, I won't bet, for, hang me, if I think I'd be able to pay, if I lost," replied Algernon. "But I defy you to guess, though."

"Ah, my boy, a man who has served with Lee's army, where we used to satisfy our hunger by buckling our belts tighter around us, is not easily puzzled. The reason for this change is, the old boy's going to be married."

"The colonel laid back in his chair, and puffed his cigar in triumph."

CHAPTER VI. OUT OF THE DARK.

"HALLO!" exclaimed Peters, as he surveyed the threatening demonstrations, "are you insane enough to imagine that you can prevent me from leaving this place?"

"You shan't take the gal, now!" Rocky replied, defiantly. "You kin git out yourself, jes' as soon as you like. Your room's a good deal better nor your company."

"You no take my gal!" exclaimed the Italian, in wrath, brandishing the glittering knife as he spoke.

"If we leave the girl, you'll let us go, then?" Peters asked, quietly.

"Jes' as soon as you like; the sooner the better," replied the rough. "And you kin see that you kin git out of here, if you don't git a head put on you for poking your nose into other people's business."

The face of the girl grew paler and paler; she fancied that the men who had come so timely to her aid were now about to desert her, frightened by the threats of the rough. She knew little of the iron wills of the officers.

"I'll give you just one minute to get away from that door, my friend," Peters said, calmly, not a trace of agitation in his voice.

A long breath of relief came from the lips of the child-woman, and the rigid muscles of her face relaxed. Her quick instinct told her that there was yet hope of escape.

Rocky looked into the stolid face of the detective in wonder. He could hardly believe his hearing.

"Wot did you say?" he demanded, roughly.

"Your hearing must be bad; I spoke plain enough," Peters said, a half-smile creeping over his face. "I said that I would give you one minute to get away from that door, you ugly whelp!"

And the detective put his hands in his coat-pockets, and surveyed the astonished rough with a scornful smile.

"Oh! I git away from the door?" responded Rocky, sarcastically. "Oh, yes, in course!"

How could a feller refuse such a pebble sent as you kin see, a pebble come—quite a nob! You'll excuse me, now, won't you?"

There was a keen touch of delicate humor in the words of the ruffian—a playful badinage which the rough himself enjoyed if no one else of the company did.

"Will you hold your breath till I git away from this door?" he asked, suddenly.

"The minute's about up," Peters said, calmly, without deigning to reply to the polite question so abruptly put.

"Well, wot if it is?" cried Rocky, defiantly. "Wot are you a-goin' to do about it? You don't s'pose you kin talk me away from this door, do you? You ain't sich a flat as all that! Wot are you a-goin' for to do now, say?"

"Put a bullet through your head, you ugly brute!" cried Peters, suddenly drawing a revolver from his pocket and leveling it full at the head of the rough. At the same moment Hank, by a dextrous kick, knocked the knife out of the Italian's hand and sent it whizzing against the wall.

The tables were turned completely.

Rocky glared in astonishment into the mouth of the little shining tube leveled directly at his head, while the old Italian stood with outstretched arms, speechless with rage. The face of the girl brightened up with joy as she beheld the discomfiture of her persecutors.

"Drop that pitcher, or I'll blow the whole top of your ugly head off!" cried Peters, sternly, addressing the rough.

Slowly Rocky lowered his hand, in sullen rage.

"Would you go for to murder a cove?" he asked, doggedly.

"It would only be cheating the hangman of a job," Peters replied. "Now stand out of the way."

Slowly Rocky obeyed the command.

"Go ahead, girl," Peters said.

With a bound like a frightened deer, she sprung forward and ascended the stairs. No need to repeat the command a second time.

The Italian tried one last appeal.

"Oh, good sir, you no take my child?" he implored. "I no beat her no more!"

Played out, said Hank, laconically. The meaning of the terse sentence was perfectly plain, even to the foreign ears of the Italian.

The supplication gave place to threats.

"Diavolo! I kill you both for this, some day, you see!" Jocky cried, in wild rage.

"Save your breath to cool your soup with!" replied Peters, quietly.

The two officers then proceeded to the door—still keeping, however, a wary eye upon the rough and the Italian.

"I'll git someone with you for this, see if I don't, cuss me!" cried Rocky, shaking his clenched hand in menace at the men who had beaten him at his own game.

"Let me know when that happens, will you?" Peters rejoined. "I'd like to be round when that little affair takes place. Good-by; I'm sorry I can't stop any longer. I'll come and see you some other time; by-bye!"

The door closed behind the two. They ascended the stairs, regardless of the curses that followed them from the baffled villains.

The girl was waiting on the sidewalk at the top of the stairs.

"Come right along with us," Peters said, kindly, as he gained the pavement.

"Yes, sir," the girl replied, a bright smile on her pale features, and a glad light shining in her great dark eyes.

The three proceeded along down the Bowery.

"Now, then, my girl, I must have a little talk with you," Peters said. "What is your name?"

"Lill, sir, though almost everybody calls me the Bowery Girl," she replied.

"What's the reason of that?"

"Because I sells things, sir, on that street, I s'pose."

"Are your father and mother living?"

"Never had any," was the singular reply.

"No father or mother?"

"No, sir; none that I ever heard tell on."

"Have you always lived with this man?"

"Yes, sir."

"But he's not your father?"

"Oh, no, sir!" the girl replied, quickly.

"He's often cursed me for a beggar's brat. If I was his child he wouldn't treat me as bad as he allers has."

"You must have had a pretty hard time of it," the detective said. Even his nature, hardened as it was by constant contact with crime and its votaries, felt a great degree of pity for the Bowery Girl.

"Oh, I have, sir, lots of hard times!" the girl said, earnestly. "I've been running in the streets, a-selling things for Jocky, ever since I've been able to walk. I've allers let him beat me without saying a word, but, somehow, he got my mad up to-night—I've got a temper of my own sometimes—and I didn't care whether I lived or died."

"Then, you are perfectly willing to leave this man, a precious part—of life itself."

"Well, my daughter," said Colonel Davenant, entering the room, "you have sent for me, I presume, to say good-by."

She looked up quickly, and then, as her eyes filled with tears, she rushed into his great, broad, manly breast.

"Oh, papa, I can not leave you—I can not leave you," she murmured.

He would not trust himself to speak at once, and so he contented himself with simply stroking her hair with a gentle, sympathetic touch which had grown very familiar to her in that past which she was about to quit forever.

A peculiar sort of expression came over the shrewd face of the detective at the "slang" used by the girl. The words grated on his ear, coming from girlish lips. Lill's eyes were quick; she detected the smile in an instant, and guessed that in some way, she had displeased her protector.

"Wot's the matter, sir?" she asked. "I hope I ain't said nothing that I hadn't ought to!"

"No, no! Of course not!" replied the detective, feeling a little guilty. "What makes you think so?"

"Why, I see'd it in your face," she said. "Oh, my eyes are precious sharp ones. I said something that you didn't like. I wouldn't do that for anything in this world."

The earnest tones of the girl told that she spoke the truth. "You're the first one that ever took my part, and I'd do anything for you, I would. Jest you try me and see!"

Peters could not help smiling at the maid's earnest way.

"Well, my girl, I am only acting as agent for somebody else, I am a detective officer."

"Do you know I thought so?" cried the girl quickly. "You're so kinder cool, and not afraid like."

Again the officer smiled—this time at the compliment.

"Yes, as I said," he continued, "I am employed by a certain party to hunt you up, and take you away from this life that you are leading."

"Somebody a-thinkin' of me?" cried Lill in wonder.

"Yes. Do you remember the old gentleman that asked you where you lived a few days ago, in the Bowery?"

"An old gray-headed chap?"

"Oh, I remember! He asked me a lot of queer questions."

"He's the party that sent me to hunt you up. I found you, by the aid of the boot-black named Shrimpy."

And as Peters happened to glance around, he found that the boy had been following along, discreetly, in the rear. "Oh, I forgot; I promised him twenty-five cents. Hank, give the youngster a twenty-five cent stamp."

Shrimpy received the money, ducked his head in acknowledgment to Peters, grinned at Lill, and immediately departed.

"What does this old gent want of me?" asked the girl in astonishment.

"That I don't know," Peters replied.

"All I know is that he employed me to find you. Perhaps he knows something about your parents; or, it may be, that he has taken a fancy to you, and has resolved to provide for you in the future."

"Wot! take care of me?" asked Lill quickly.

And Peters noticed, to his astonishment, that there was an earnest look upon the girl's face, and that she did not seem to be overpleased at the idea.

"Yes, I suppose that is his intention. Mind, I am only guessing what he intends to do, and why he wants to find you, because he did not tell me what his intentions were."

For a few steps the girl walked on in silence. Her eyes were cast upon the ground, and she seemed deep in thought. Peters watched her intently. The detective flattered himself that he was a pretty good hand at reading faces, but this Girl of the Streets puzzled him.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 65.)

In the Web:

THE GIRL-WIFE'S TRIALS.

A HEART AND LIFE ROMANCE OF THE CRESCENT CITY.

BY EDWIN SOUTH.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEDDING PARTY.

It was a beautiful evening. The sun had set, round and red, throwing its last slanting beams over the waters of Lake Pontchartrain, as the full-faced moon sailed grandly up from the east and looked down on the circling city of New Orleans.

The tall, dark magnolias held in their arms large trumpet-shaped flowers, so full of perfume that the luxuriant plants, which everywhere abound in the Crescent City, seemed to be heavy with the rich odor, while the river wound like a belt of shimmering silver between artificial banks of darkest emerald.

In front of Colonel Davenant's house on St. Charles street a long line of glittering equipages were drawn, and from the lower to the highest story lights blazed with a brilliancy that lit up the surrounding grounds.

From the cluster of orange trees, now white with dainty blossoms, parti-colored lanterns depended, and through the avenues beneath the trees flitted gay ladies and handsome gentlemen, interchanging the amenities of social life, or bowing down before the shrine of the boy-god Cupid.

Passing through the elegant parlors, where plate-glass windows, heavy brocade curtains, and soft velvet carpets gave an air of comfort and luxury, we encounter knots of ladies and gentlemen, all discussing in an animated manner, the great event of the evening—the marriage of Mark Blanchard to Miss Blanche Davenant.

In an upper room the bride elect sits, robed for the ceremony. She never looked more graceful, nor lovelier, than on this occasion. Her dress of sheeny white satin fitted her lithe, girlish figure to perfection, and beneath its ample folds a tiny slipped foot peeped out, that might have awakened the envy of a Cinderella.

The sweet, child-like beauty of her face, however, was somewhat clouded by a shadow of unpeppable sadness, and it was only with the greatest effort that she restrained her tears.

The fatal hour, when she must forever bury her love for Graham Cecil, had now arrived, and she felt how empty her future must be without it. It is a hard thing for a man to put away finally the passion of his life, but it is doubly terrible for a woman to do so. With a man, love is but an event at best; but, with a woman—a true woman—it is part—a precious part—of life itself.

"Well, my daughter," said Colonel Davenant, entering the room, "you have sent for me, I presume, to say good-by."

She looked up quickly, and then, as her eyes filled with tears, she rushed into his great, broad, manly breast.

"Oh, papa, I can not leave you—I can not leave you," she murmured.

He would not trust himself to speak at once, and so he contented himself with simply stroking her hair with a gentle, sympathetic touch which had grown very familiar to her in that past which she was about to quit forever.

"You do not relish this union, I fear, my child," said Colonel Davenant, at last; "but, I am inclined to think it is only a passing whim, which Mark's assiduous care and love will dispel completely."

"I hope so."

"But, don't you do more than hope? Do you not think so?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! That's a very strange reply."

"I can't help it, then. Strange as it is, I do not know whether I hate Mark Blanchard or not."

"My daughter!" the old gentleman started at this exclamation, dropped from his lips, and he held Blanche out from him at arm's length, "if I thought you were serious about this, if I thought it was even possible for you to hate any person who has been so uniformly kind to you as Mark Blanchard has been, late as is the hour, I would not permit this ceremony to proceed. I am both surprised and shocked."

There was a flutter of silks and crisp laces in the hall, and the next moment the two young ladies who were to act as bridesmaids fluttered into the apartment.

Father and daughter recovered at once from their agitation, and smilingly welcomed the new-comers.

"Miss Blanche, the minister is downstairs," said Miss Adele Bartmore, the tallest as well as the prettiest of the girls, while her companion, the proud Miss McTives, folded her hands, demurely, over her breast and awaited in silence the pleasure of the bride elect.

"Miss Blanche, do young gentlemen are down stairs, and I's sent up to see as if you is ready yet." These were Betsey, the colored servant girl's words, and the head of the speaker was thrust in at the half-open door as she uttered them.

"Tell him that I am ready, Betsey," replied Blanche, and then she turned to her father and said: "I am doing my duty, papa, as I understand it, and I leave the rest with God."

She put up her arms around the neck of her father, and clung close, very close, to him, as she heard the sound of Mark Blanchard's step upon the stairs.

"Good-by, papa," she whispered.

He drew her to him tenderly, and kissing her, repeatedly exclaimed: "Good-by, my little pet, and God in his mercy bless and protect you."

Adele Bartmore felt very much like weeping. She was much given to tears, but the still stolidity of her companion, Miss McTives, restrained her, and so there were Miss McTives' instead of weeping when Mark Blanchard stepped lightly into the room.

He was dressed in a suit of black, lusterless but stylish, and looked every inch a man. His face was wreathed in smiles, and in his gloved hand he held a rich bouquet of natural flowers.

These he handed, with a graceful bow, to Blanche, saying, in an undertone, "This is as faithful as I can be; sweets to the sweet." Then, turning to Colonel Davenant, he said: "I hope to make amends for my past idle, pleasure-seeking life, by a lifetime of constant devotion to the best interests of your daughter. And if she is only as happy in the future as I shall try to make her, neither you nor she shall have any cause to regret this evening's ceremony."

The two men shook hands cordially; just then the musicians in the parlor struck up "The Wedding March," and, the next moment, the whole party were descending to the brilliant drawing-room, where the minister and assembled guests awaited them.

It was a brilliant scene. The long, splendid rooms filled with the gaiety and fashion of the greatest city of the South; the sweet voice of mellow music floating everywhere, and the calm, unimpassioned minister, book in hand, standing in the center of the room ready to pronounce the words that bind together two persons for good or evil.

The bridal party slowly approached the center of the apartment. Blanche was leaning upon the arm of her father, while the eager eyes of old Gabriel Blanchard followed her from the remotest corner. This is what he had struggled for so long, and now his plans were about to be consummated; his nephew and heir would, in a few moments, be the husband of the only child of his most intimate friend. He arose, and leaning on his staff, tottered forward until he had almost touched the elbow of his protegee.

Then there was a calm—a calm so deep that the breathing of the audience could be distinctly heard.

The minister lifted his eyes from the floor, and surveyed the company with one sweeping glance. Then he said, in a deep voice:

"If anybody knows aught why this man and this woman should not be joined in holy wedlock, let them speak now—"

Before he could finish the sentence, the weird form of old Martha appeared in the doorway, and, shambling directly to the minister's side, and looking Mark Blanchard sternly in the face, she lifted her long, bony finger with an authoritative gesture, and said:

"This man is the lawful husband of a living wife!"

The book fell from the hands of the wonder-struck preacher; Blanche started back, and fell fainting into the arms of her father, while Mark Blanchard gazed at old Martha as if she had been an apparition conjured up by some foul spirit, from the gloomiest depths of Hades, to bear witness against him.

CHAPTER XV.
THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

It was a terrible moment for him; it was the crisis in his checkered career, and he felt it was necessary to meet it courageously, as befitted a brave, crime-stained man.

Turning upon Martha, he said:

"Who are you that dare to invade the privacy of this house for the purpose of creating a dramatic scene, which, but for the effect it has had upon Miss Davenant here, might be turned into a ridiculous farce?"

"Who am I?" retorted Martha. "I am simply an old woman who don't like to see young men have two wives, even if one is as far away as Mexico."

Mark's eyes flashed around upon the astonished company. He perceived at once that the old woman's speech was having a serious effect; and then, for the first time, he saw his way out of this disagreeable dilemma.

Drawing himself up with a self-satisfied air, he said, carelessly, and smiling all the while:

"She's crazy. That's all. Here, old woman, run off; that's a good soul. Go."

Those who had gathered around the prin-

cipal actors in this drama now began to shrink away from Martha, and a few of the very young ladies indeed hid their faces, and ran, hiding themselves finally behind their parents or lovers.

Martha was astonished. This brazen piece of acting on the part of Mark Blanchard was a new phase in the proceedings for which she had not come prepared, and so she said:

"Yes; I am sad, because this is the last time that I shall ever feel the touch of your arms, the last time that my head will ever lay on your breast. Estevan, I have come to bid you farewell." Mournful, indeed, were the tones of Nanon's voice, and her deep emotion almost choked her utterance.

"Come to bid me farewell?" the officer exclaimed, in astonishment. Although when the fair French girl had first appeared to him and announced that she had followed him from Orleans, in his heart he grieved at her coming; but, now that she was about to leave, a feeling of regret came over him.

"Yes, a long farewell, for it is—forever!" she replied.

"Forever! Do you mean that you will never see me again, Nanon?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But, why this sudden change in the state of your feelings toward me?" he questioned, in astonishment.

"I have not changed, Estevan," she said, slowly and sadly. "Even at this moment, when my lips are about to speak the words that signify that we are to part, never to meet again, I love you more deeply than I have ever done, even when all seemed bright before us, and we looked forward to a long future of joy."

"Your words are strange; I can not understand them," Estevan said.

"Part parts us, not my will," she replied, mournfully.

"Explain."

"You remember the simple story of my life?"

"Yes, partly."

"I was reared in a convent until I was eighteen; six months ago I was taken from the seclusion of the cloister by the man—the agent of my unknown father—who had looked after my welfare since I was a child. I met you—loved you. I told you, frankly, of the mystery that encircled me. You did not heed it, but declared that you loved me, and still would love me, no matter who or what my parents were."

"Yes, what matters it to me?" Estevan cried, quickly.

"It was like your noble heart," Nanon said, gazing with eyes lustrous with tenderness, upon the Spaniard's face. "I followed you from Orleans here; with me came the man who has been like a father to me since my earliest remembrances. This man has discovered the motive that brought me here. He seeks to crush the love that is in my heart for you. Failing in all other ways, as a last resource, he revealed to me the secret of my birth."

"And that secret?" questioned Estevan, quickly.

"Must separate us forever," replied the girl, tears starting in her dark eyes; and then, unable to restrain her emotion, she buried her face upon her lover's breast.

"I can not understand why that should separate us!" exclaimed the Spaniard, in astonishment.

"When you know who and what I am, you will understand," said Nanon, sadly, raising her head and gazing once again into the face of her lover.

"Tell me, then, the truth!"

"Who is the man most feared and detested in all the region washed by the waters of the Gulf? Speak the name that is greeted with curses, and maledictions from the lips of all honest men, and you will pronounce the name of my father."

"Surely, you can not mean—"

"The Terror of the Gulf? the man whose hand is red with blood, whose soul is stained with crime? Yes, I mean him!"

"Your father then is—"

"Lafitte, the Pirate," moaned the poor girl, sadly.

"The dreaded sea rover your father?"

"Yes; that is the barrier that rises like a dark wall between you and me. You came of a noble Spanish family. You can not soil the honor of your race by uniting your fate with the daughter of the buccaner. And if your love was strong enough to bid you overlook the obstacle, my passion is deep enough to not to accept the sacrifice. I would give—I know not what—but everything that we poor humans call dear in this world, to rest one little hour in your arms, your wedded wife. But it can not—must not be! Here we part forever and forever!" The expression of agony in the voice of the hapless girl was deep indeed.

"Why, Nanon, I have met your father within the last few hours. This wound on my cheek comes from his hand. Even now the pirate Lafitte is a prisoner in the guard-house of the fort."

"My father?" cried Nanon, in amazement.

"If it is your father, the Terror of the Gulf, he is our prisoner. But I can not believe that this man is my father. He can not be ten years older than myself—a young man."

"Yes; Baptiste told me that he was not old."

"Baptiste?"

"Yes, Antoine Baptiste. He is the protector who has watched over me since childhood. It was he who told me the secret of my birth, in order to separate me from you."

"To separate you from me!" said Estevan in astonishment. "Why should he wish to do that?"

"For a moment Nanon cast down her eyes in agitation; then when she raised them again to the face of Estevan, a burning blush swept over her pale features.

"He loves me," she said, slowly.

"Loves thee! and that is the reason why he told thee that thou wert the daughter of Lafitte? I do not believe it."

"I feel that it is the truth," Nanon said, sadly.

"We can easily discover whether it is or not," Estevan exclaimed. "To-morrow you shall visit Lafitte in his prison. If he is thy father, he will not deny it. You will speedily learn the truth."

As Estevan spoke, he carelessly paced across the room, passing near the window. Then, on the still night air, rung out the sharp report of a pistol-shot. With a cry, Estevan staggered, and then fell senseless to the floor. Some concealed foe, ambushed amid the foliage of the garden, had shot him through the window.

With a cry of agony, Nanon sprang to the side of the fallen man. Eagerly she sought for traces of the wound. On the temple, just by the roots of the hair, came a faint line of blood, that marked the track of the assassin's bullet. By a hair's breadth only had the Spanish captain escaped from death. The ball had plowed its way through the glossy curls of the Spaniard, just grazing the skin, and that was all.

A cry of joy broke from the lips of the girl when she discovered the nature of the wound. Soon Estevan's senses returned. He opened his eyes and gazed around him

with an expression of wonder. At first, memory was a blank, but gradually the remembrance of the events of the last few minutes came back to him.

He rose to his feet, and drew a long breath. The Spaniard had served in some hard-fought campaigns, but had never been as near to death before.

"By the Virgin!" he cried, with a shiver, as he thought by what a miracle he had escaped; "the aim of that fellow was a true one. But who can it be that seeks to assassinate me?" Then, to the mind of the captain, came the remembrance of the sudden disappearance of the tall Yankee, the friend of the American, from the forest glade. "I understand, now," he said; "this is a friend of your reputed father, Lafitte, who has attempted my life in revenge for the capture of his leader."

"You and my father, then, have met as enemies?" Nanon asked, with a shudder of fear.

"Yes; that is, if the man be your father. But, Nanon, I cannot believe that to be the truth. You say that this protector—your father's agent—loves you. May he not have devised this story to separate us?" Estevan asked.

"It is possible; and yet I do not think that he would deceive me," Nanon said, thoughtfully.

"A man in love will do a great many things that else he would not have dreamed of," Estevan replied. "To-morrow you shall learn the truth. Come at two in the afternoon. You shall see this man, and learn whether he be his child or not. I cannot believe that he is your father."

"Till to-morrow, then, adieu," she said.

With a sudden impulse, Estevan caught the girl in his arms, and for a moment held her to his heart. Then Nanon released herself, and glided from the room.

Estevan watched the door close behind her—a peculiar expression upon his face.

"What magic charm is there in this girl's nature that makes me love her when she is with me?" he asked thoughtfully, communing with himself. "At times I wish that I had never looked upon her face; that is, when she is absent; but, in her presence, the old-time witchery comes over me, and I feel as if I could give up all the world for her sake. What a fool I am!" he cried, suddenly, pacing up and down the room, with a restless step.

"Everything bids me separate myself from this girl, and crush out the foolish passion that her face has given life to in my heart. Why did I not let her go, instead of striving to detain her? At present the chance to wed the heiress, Isabel, is good. My rival is in captivity, denounced as the pirate Lafitte. I had an idea, when he first appeared here, that he was one of the buccaner's gang, but did not think that he was Lafitte in person. His doom is sealed, if my father holds to his purpose. Isabel, too, when she learns that the man she loves is the dreaded 'Terror of the Gulf,' must shrink from him in loathing. Now, what foolish whim prompted me to stay the departure of this girl? Why did I not let her depart in peace? It angers me when I think how weak and infirm I am in nerve where a woman is concerned!" The Spaniard's face was clouded as he uttered the exclamation. "This secret assassin, too, must be looked after. I must not die the dog's death, now that victory is in my grasp. I'll place a guard of soldiers in the garden." Estevan went forth instantly to give the necessary orders.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MORE MYSTERY.

UNFLINCHINGLY the sailor looked into the face of the Spaniard—no trace of fear in his features.

"Death, eh?" he asked, carelessly.

"Yes," replied the commandante, firmly; "let no vain hope of escape cross your mind. You are fully in my power. All Pensacola will rejoice when it learns that the 'Terror of the Gulf' has fallen by the bullets of my soldiers. By some subtle power you have won the foolish love of my ward, Isabel. She does not yet know who and what you are; but when she learns that you are the dreaded pirate Lafitte, the man whose hands are red with blood, she will turn from you in horror, and curse the hour when she first looked upon your face. I know her gentle nature well. She will never love the outlaw upon whose head a price is set."

"You will tell her, then, that I am 'Lafitte'?" the sailor asked.

"She shall know it before she is an hour older!" exclaimed the commandante.

"She will not believe you," the sailor said, smiling. "She has too much faith in me. She knows me now as Rupert Vance. Years ago, when first we met, I had another appellation. When you tell her that I am the pirate, and ask her to cast away the love for me that is in her heart, she will believe that you speak falsely, and that it is for your son's sake you utter the falsehood."

The Spaniard remained silent for a moment. In his heart he knew that the American spoke the truth.

"Why not accept my offer? Take life and freedom, and leave this girl," the commandante exclaimed impatiently. "There are other maidens in the world as fair as she."

"My eyes have never looked upon them," the sailor replied.

"On one hand, life, freedom; on the other, death! You are a madman to hesitate, even for a moment!" The anxiety of the Spaniard was plainly visible.

"I have pledged my faith unto Isabel; I will meet death unflinchingly rather than break that pledge," the sailor said, firmly.

"You are mad indeed!" the commandante exclaimed.

"No—only honest. Besides, I am not dead yet, nor do I see the soldiers drawn out, with their shining muskets leveled at my heart. There's many a slip between the cup and the lip. One hour makes me your prisoner—the next may see me free again. The wheel of fortune turns ever; she is a fickle goddess. If she frown on me now, soon may she smile."

"You do not despair, then?" asked the Spaniard, in wonder.

"No; nor will I until I see the flash of the powder that drives the balls that bring me death," replied the sailor, carelessly.

A moment the Spaniard looked into the fearless face of his prisoner; then dropped his eyes to earth and seemed lost in thought.

By the dim light which the lantern gave, the sailor surveyed the massive features of the old soldier—a peculiar expression upon his face. And as he looked, thoughtfully he pushed back the curls that clustered over his bronzed forehead, as though by the act he would quicken the motion of his brain.

"Strange how familiar the face of this

man is to me," he murmured, lowly, to himself. "Can he know aught of the mystery that clouds all my early life? If I have never seen him in the past, why should his face recall remembrances of that past? It is a riddle; shall I ever solve it?"

Suddenly the commandante raised his eyes once again to the face of the young man.

"I will give you until to-morrow morning to reflect upon the offer I have made you. If you do not accept, at six in the morning you will die."

"Why, what a respite you give me!" said the sailor, smiling. "You will be spared the pain of again hearing me refuse your offer."

"Ah! in the morning you will accept!" cried the old man, eagerly.

"No; on the contrary, in the morning I shall be free," replied Rupert, calmly.

The commandante looked at the sailor with wonder in his face. The coolness of the rover stupefied him.

"You will escape? Impossible!"

"Do not be too sure of that. I have a presentiment that I shall not see the morning light peep in through yonder barred window."

The Spaniard seized the lantern, and advancing to the window, examined the thick iron bars that guarded it; tried each one with his hand. All were secure in their places.

"You cannot escape from here unless by a miracle," the commandante exclaimed, turning to Rupert.

"Fortune may work that miracle to save me. But one thing I can not understand: why are you so eager to have me accept your offer and depart? What difference does it make to you whether I am in the land of the living or under the green sod? The men of your nation are not wont to be merciful to their foes."

"I do not seek your life," the soldier said, gravely. "I would rather aid your escape than see you fall by the bullets of my men. I have offered you fairly. Blame your own folly if you perish like a dog."

"You have some reason for not wishing me to die," the sailor said, suddenly.

The Spaniard started at the words; a troubled look swept over his face, and he avoided the earnest gaze of the American.

"Senior commandante, two objects brought me to Pensacola: first, to win the girl I loved, your ward, Isabel Moreno, and thus redeem the pledge I gave to her years ago; second, to unravel the tangled skein of mystery that conceals the secret of my birth. I think that you know something of that secret. Is it not so? Is not that the reason why you would rather aid my escape than see me die?"

The commandante bit his lip convulsively. His powerful frame for a moment shook with agitation; but answer made he none. He took the lantern from the table, and proceeded to the door.

"You will not answer my question?" Rupert cried.

"I can not; how can I speak of what I do not know?" asked the Spaniard, turning and facing his prisoner. And, as he spoke, even to himself the tones of his voice sounded hollow and unnatural.

"You are deceiving me!" the sailor cried, in contempt.

"How would you like to receive a visit from my ward, Isabel, before you die?" asked the commandante, suddenly, as though striving to change the subject of the conversation.

"Her presence would be as welcome to me as the sight of land to the ocean-tossed mariner!" cried Rupert, eagerly. "But no; you are jesting with me. You will not let her visit me in my dungeon."

"I do not jest," said the commandante, gravely. "If she wishes to come, she can; I will interpose no objection; nay, more, I myself will tell her that you are here, and that she can visit you if she so desires."

"I thank you for the favor, even though you send me to death the moment the interview is over!" exclaimed the sailor, warmly.

"Is there anything else that you desire?" asked the Spaniard, lingering at the door as though he were unwilling to depart.

"Nothing."

"Within an hour Isabel will come."

The door closed behind the stately figure of the Spanish officer. Rupert heard the harsh grating sound made by the heavy bolts as they shot into their sockets. He was alone in the gloom. Alone, to dream of the bliss of once more holding within his arms the woman that he loved so well.

The commandante, after giving orders to the sergeant to keep a diligent watch upon the prisoner, descended to the barrack-yard. Crossing it, he passed through the gate that gave entrance to the garden which surrounded his own mansion.

At the gate he met his son.

"Where is Isabel, Estevan?" the father asked.

"I do not know," the captain replied, gloomily. "She seems to take particular care to keep out of my way. From the manner in which she acts, one would think that my sight was poison to her."

"I have just come from an interview with the prisoner," the commandante added, bitterly.

"Curse him!" cried Estevan, bitterly. "Why did you interfere just as you did, father? The fellow has marked me for life; but for you, my sword would have given me ample revenge."

"Estevan, my son, it was to save your life that I came. You are no match for this man."

"No match for him!" exclaimed the son, quickly. "Foolish! Spanish army holds not ten better swordsmen than myself."

"And yet that mark upon your cheek seems to declare that this sea-rover is your master," replied the commandante, significantly.

"It was by a trick that he broke down my guard and wounded me."

"And had I not come, and the fight continued, by another trick he would have passed his blade through your body," the father said, gravely.

"No, father, I was prepared for him; he could not have succeeded in a second attempt. Is there a magic power protects this man's life, that you are so certain he would kill me?" Estevan asked, scornfully.

"Yes; he is protected from your sword," the commandante replied, slowly and sorrowfully.

Estevan stared at his father in amazement. He could hardly believe his hearing.

"What protects him?" he asked.

"The weight of guilt that hangs about my soul," answered the aged soldier, in a solemn tone.

"The weight of guilt?" exclaimed the captain, in wonder.

"Yes; years ago I wronged this man. It was my act that killed his mother. Would

it not be a just vengeance if he should kill my son? It was to save you that I interposed."

"The death of the mother of this man lies at your door?" Estevan asked, astonished at the strange revelation.

"Yes."

"Does he know it?"

"No; he does not even know who or what his parents were. His birth is a mystery to him. But, now, some dark angel must have whispered in his ear that I know something of the dreaded secret, for he questioned me. Taken by surprise at first, I could hardly find words to evade the question."

"But the father of this man?"

"Do not speak of him!" cried the commandante, quickly; "the thought is worm-wood to me. Oh! sleeping or waking, a single face alone is ever before my eyes; the face is ghastly with the hues of death, although the red life-current of the Indian flows through every vein! The memory of that face haunts me, and turns all the sweetness of this life into bitter drops of gall."

Intense were the tones of agony, and the stalwart figure of the old soldier trembled with emotion.

Estevan looked on in wonder. Never before had he beheld his stern and haughty father so agitated.

"This man's father is dead, then?"

"No questions," replied the commandante; "speak no more on this subject. I can not bear it. As I told you, I have just come from the prisoner. On three conditions I have offered to release him. If he accepts, he is a free man."

"What, you will let this dangerous rover go free, now that you have him securely in your power, his life at your mercy?" Estevan cried, in extreme astonishment.

"Yes; if he will give up Isabel, forswear his quarrel with you, agree to leave Pensacola forever and never return to it, I will give him his freedom."

"And if he refuses, you will kill him?"

"No, no, I can not kill him; his blood must not stain my hands!" exclaimed the commandante, in great excitement.

CHAPTER XXX.

A WOMAN'S LOVE.

ESTEVAN could not understand why his father should be so strangely excited.

"You will not kill him?"

"No," replied the commandante, "I can not stain my soul with such a crime as that. Besides, I have done this man wrong enough already; I will not add to the account."

"But if he refuses to accede to the conditions, how then will you act?"

"Keep him in close confinement until I can send both you and Isabel away," replied the father, slowly. "I have a scheme by means of which I think I can induce Isabel to give up this man and receive you for her husband."

"Give him up!" exclaimed Estevan, quickly. "That she will never do. I know something of her character; death alone can make her prove false to the pledge which she has given. She loves this daring sea-rover, and she will be faithful to that love until the shadow of the tomb falls upon her."

"Do not be so sure of that. By fair means I know that Isabel will never consent to break her word; but, by cunning, she may be tricked into acting as I wish. If I can induce her to give this sailor up, and with her own lips tell him so, then he will readily agree to the conditions which will give him freedom."

"I hope you will succeed, father; but I have very little faith that you will. A girl of Isabel's passionate nature loves once, loves always," Estevan said, an expression of doubt upon his features.

"It is through her love for this man that I shall win her consent to give him up," the commandante rejoined.

"I can not guess the riddle."

"Within an hour it will be solved. I shall go to Isabel at once. I have promised the sailor that Isabel shall be allowed to see him to-night."

Estevan gazed at his father in amazement.

"What? Father, are you mad?" he cried. "Do you not see, that, if you let them see each other, it will but strengthen them in their resolutions?"

"No," the father replied, shaking his head, gravely. "It will be a final meeting. Once they part it will be forever."

"Well, the affair is in your hands," Estevan said, his face expressing the doubt he did not speak; "do as you please. If you succeed, it will be miraculous."

"Ah, Estevan! you little guess the crime that I am committing, but it is for your sake. You are dearer to me than all the world besides," the commandante said, sadly. Then he left the young man and proceeded on toward his mansion.

Estevan looked after his father in astonishment. He could not understand the strange words of his sire.

"There is some deep mystery in all this," he said, thoughtfully. "I can not guess it, nor will I weary my brains in trying; time will bring forth the truth. It is strange, though, that my father should be so anxious to preserve the life of this daring outlaw, who has ventured so boldly into our city, despite the fact that a heavy price has been set upon his head, and that, if recognized, he is liable to be shot down without warning. One can not question his courage, though, in this case, it is more like madness."

The soldier proceeded onward to his quarters.

Then, from amid the foliage of the garden, rose two dark forms. Carefully they listened to the sounds of the retreating footsteps. The two who thus laid in ambush were Andrews, the Yankee sailor, and the Appalachee chief, who had forsaken his nation and become a Chickasaw.

"The pesky serpents!" exclaimed Andrews, cautiously; "did you hear what they said, Injun?"

"The Snake-with-three-tails got long ears—hear much!" replied the chief.

"What is to be done? The tarnal villains have got my cap'n locked up in the guard-house over yonder, and maybe they may change their minds and have him shot at any minute. But if they do, I swear to gracious, I'll run the brigantine up the harbor and knock Pensacola into such a heap of ruins that there won't be one stone left on another in proper fix."

Deep was the voice of the Yankee and stern was his brow as he uttered the threat.

"The white-red-skin shall not die—the forest chief will save him from the long knives," said the Indian, tersely.

"You will? How?" exclaimed Andrews, a glow of joy lighting up his rugged features.

"Wait—you see," replied the chief.

"What's to be done now?" asked Andrews, who knew that it was of little use to question the Indian further.

"You wait here. The chief will follow the great warrior of the pale-faces. The ears of the red-man are open—he would hear more," replied the savage.

"Good; I'll wait."

"Chief, come back soon, maybe," and, without further word, the red-man followed in the footsteps of the commandante, treading on the earth so lightly that no sound of his footfall broke the stillness of the night.

Andrews watched him until he was out of sight.

"He's a bull team—a spanker, and no mistake!" Andrews exclaimed. Then a sound fell on his ear, and quickly he sought concealment under the leaves. Hardly had he crouched down, concealed from view by the bushes, when the figure of a man stole cautiously through the garden.

He moved with stealthy tread, and evidently feared discovery. In his path, he passed close to the hiding-place of Andrews. The Yankee recognized the stranger at once. It was the Frenchman, Baptiste, who had acted as the second of the girl who, disguised in man's attire, had taken Estevan's place and encountered Rupert.

Leaving Andrews snugly hid amid the bushes, he will follow the movements of Baptiste. Treading as lightly as a cat, he proceeded onward. He halted at last, within some thirty feet of the house in which Captain Estevan had his quarters. The light burning within the captain's room showed plainly through the open window.

Baptiste drew a large pistol from his belt, and, sinking behind a bush, leveled it full at the open window.

"Now, then," he muttered, "let this Spaniard approach that window, and I'll send him to the shades below ere he can utter a prayer for salvation. The Spaniard dead, Nanon will forget him, and learn to love me, the man who would freely pour out his life's blood, drop by drop, to serve her."

With the result of Baptiste's plan we are already acquainted, as the narrow escape of the Spanish captain from the bullet of the ambushed foe has been detailed in the preceding chapter.

In the darkness of his prison-house the sailor sat. An hour or two had elapsed since the commandante had departed. No other visitor had approached the prisoner.

Deeply musing, the quick ear of Rupert caught the sound of footsteps approaching the portal that gave entrance to his cell. The door opened, and Roque Vasca—bearing a lantern, lighted, in his hand, which, after entering, he placed upon the table—conducted Isabel into the room. Then the soldier left the apartment, and closed the door behind him.

The lovers were alone together.

With a cry of joy, Isabel sprang into the arms of the sailor. Tenderly Rupert held the slight form of the beautiful girl to his heart, and kissed the pure, white forehead gently.

"Isabel, my heart's love," he said, softly.

"Oh, Rupert, you are in such danger!" she murmured.

"Danger surrounds us ever in this life, Isabel. It walks by our side on the earth, floats with us on the heaving billows of the sea. I have looked so often on danger that it has become an old, a familiar friend; its presence has no terror for me."

"But now, there is no hope of escape for you," the girl said, sadly, the hot tears filling the beautiful blue eyes.

"No hope! Isabel, you are wrong," Rupert said, quickly. "Hope never forsakes us in this world until the last breath is drawn, and we enter the portal that lets us into the other life. I have been placed in as desperate a strait as this before. Why, I have tossed a week in an open boat on the broad Atlantic; been driven nearly mad by thirst—like the ancient mariner, water all around and not a drop to drink. Yet, safety has come at last. 'Never despair' is the motto that I have blazoned on the flag that I have nailed to my mast-head of life, and while I live, I never will."

"Rupert, do you not know that you are to die to-morrow morning?"

AN ODD SONG!

BY JOS. P. MORAN.

You may roam this world o'er from one end to the other,
But you'll never find one man look just like another—
Although you may tread every foot of its sod,
No two faces you'll find just alike, which is odd—
Oh, yes, very odd—indeed it is odd!
Philosophical friend, don't you think it is odd?

Yet there is another chap here in this city
Who looks so much like me that it was a great pity
We weren't born one, for this son of a gun!
A great deal of mischief toward me he has done—
Which was very odd—indeed it was odd!
My judicious friend, don't you think it was odd?

I was courting a girl who was called Kitty Forty,
She had cheeks like the rose and lips like a cherry,
Her form it was fair and her beauty was rare,
But this other young man got ahead of me there!
Now wasn't that odd?—indeed it was odd!
Considerate friend, don't you think it was odd?

I called very often this fair one to see,
And she always appeared very partial to me;
So one evening I went on the purpose intent
To ask if to marry me she would consent.
And I felt very odd—indeed I felt odd!
Sentimental friend, don't you think I felt odd?

When I went in the parlor, there, what met my view
But this other young man, and he courting her, too!
I asked her the reason she treated me thus;
Said she: "I liked you 'cause you looked just like Gus!"

And again I felt odd—indeed very odd!
Sympathizing friend, don't you think I felt odd?

I must have said something that didn't just suit,
For this young man he up with the toe of his boot,
And gave me such a kick that it made me feel sick—
And I left the house wishing them both to Old Nick!
Which was a very odd—indeed it was odd!
But I thought at the time that 'twas almost too odd!

The Lettre de Cachet.

BY C. D. CLARK.

EMILE DU MARTIN was in his office, in the Jeweler's quarter of the great city of Paris. He was a man yet young and was known far and near as the earnest and open advocate of the rights of the people against the more powerful. He sat at his desk looking over some accounts, when the door opened and a lady came in. Her dress had once been rich, but was now worn and faded, and her manner bespoke her one of high birth and education. She approached the desk of the merchant, and lifting her veil, showed a face of such wonderful beauty that the young man started and looked at her fixedly, for he felt that this was a woman for whom a man could even dare to die.

"Monsieur Du Martin," she said, "I have been directed to you, by a man who will deal justly with the unfortunate, and who is a judge of jewelry. Will you kindly look at this?"

She laid a small package upon the desk, and began to open it.

"Mademoiselle has not, I hope, been deceived in me," he said, politely. "I will deal justly with every one, when I can see my duty plainly."

The package was now open, and revealed a necklace of diamonds and rubies, of great value.

"In sorrow and misfortune I have still clung to this," she said, raising the jewel to her lips, "but I can hold out no longer. Monsieur, you know the value of jewels; can you tell me the worth of this?"

"I should be able, mademoiselle," he said, looking at her keenly, "since I made it myself."

"You! Then you know—"

"To whom it was sold; certainly. It was made to order for the daughter of Count de St. Verain, four years ago. It was sold for fifty thousand francs. What is your wish with regard to this necklace?"

"Ask me no questions! Look at me, and then say whether a person in such poor garb should possess a necklace worth fifty thousand francs."

"Excuse me; did you wish to sell it?"

"No; to pawn it. How much dare you advance on this pledge?"

"To you, the full value of the necklace," he said. "Pardon my presumption when I say that I know both what you are, and what your history is. Yours has been a life early crushed by fatal circumstances, beyond your power to explain away, and yet you are guiltless of wrong as I am."

"You have a noble heart, Monsieur Du Martin. May the saints be with you when your hour of trial comes. Since you are so kind, I will take one-half the price of the necklace, and leave the jewel in pledge. With this money, we hope to regain our ancient place, and prove to the satisfaction of the king that we have been greatly wronged."

He drew a book toward him and wrote a *billet de banque* for a large sum and gave it to her.

"You have made a mistake, Monsieur. This is fifty thousand francs."

"You will need it all," he said, hastily.

"As for the jewel, you had better take it with you, for I do not need it."

"You must have something in pledge for this money."

"I can not take it. Or stay; if you will leave me something, let it be the ring you wear, if it is not a keepsake."

"It is of little value," she said, drawing it from her finger. "Yet, take it, for something tells me that it may be of use to you in after days. If you are ever in trouble, and have no other way of escape, send this ring to the king, stating your trouble, and he shall do you justice."

He took the ring and placed it on his finger, and she caught his hand and pressed it to her lips and turned to go.

"Surely you do not intend to go alone. Let me walk near you—not with you for I am not worthy of that—and see you safe to your home."

"No, no," she said. "You must not go with me. I am safe alone."

She went out hastily, and he took down his sword and belt, put them on, and walked out quickly after her. Keeping the lady in sight but screening himself from her observation, he saw her turn away from the principal streets and turn toward the students' quarter of the city. Several squares from this, she met a group of roystering students, who were singing snatches of wild song, and making the air vocal with their outcries. The foremost among them, a long-haired, aristocratic, cruel-faced young man, stopped the lonely girl.

"Whom have we here?" he cried. "By'r lady, damsel, show thy face."

She struggled to free herself.

"The fool knows not who you are, Louis," said one of his companions. "Whisper your name in her ear and it will quiet her, perhaps."

The young man, with a laugh, put out his hand to tear the veil from her face, when there came the rush of feet, a low, angry

cry, and the insulter rolled upon the pavement under the force of Emile Du Martin's powerful arm. The lady took the opportunity to escape, and left Emile facing the knot of angry young men. The one they had called Louis staggered to his feet and Du Martin saw his face.

"My lord, is this yourself?" he cried, in surprise.

"Ha, Du Martin, my prince of jewelers! very well; I shall cut your heart out all the same, and you will at least have the felicity of dying by the hands of a noble. Stand back, all of you, and give the fellow fair play."

"My lord, remember your rank."

"I waive that; are you a coward?"

Emile's sword sprung from its scabbard at the word, and the two crossed blades. The others stood aside, as if they dared not interfere with their young leader, and a short conflict took place. From the first it was plain that Emile was the better swordsman of the two, and he contented himself by acting on the defensive, although his antagonist left his guard open several times.

"Why don't you assault?" hissed Louis.

"You are playing for breath, you coward!"

"I will not bear that name again, even from you," said Emile.

"Loche," shrieked Louis, repeating the obnoxious word. It was too much. Emile made a forward spring, a quick movement of his dextrous wrist, and three inches of his steel showed behind the shoulder-blade of his enemy. The duel was at an end. Du Martin drew out the ensanguined steel, and looking fiercely at the companions of the fallen man, turned upon his heel and left them, returning at once to his office, where he sat down patiently to wait.

Whom had he slain? Louis, the oldest son of Count de St. Verain, a man whose power was hardly less than that of Henry of France! He, a citizen, had shed the blood of a noble in open fight, and must take the consequences.

He did not long to wait, for there was a rattle of armed heels upon the pavement without, a hoarse order, and the door was thrown open, and a captain of guards entered the room.

"You are M. Emile Du Martin, the jeweler?"

"I am."

"Then read this which I give you. When it is read, come out at once. Make no attempt to escape, for the doors and windows are guarded."

He threw a parchment down upon the desk and strode out, and Emile took up the paper and opened it. He saw the fatal text of the *lettre de cachet*, the use of which has been so much abused in France, and below it the signature of Count Louis de St. Verain.

"I am lost," he said, "but I must bear my fate like a man. Captain, you may enter."

The stern soldier obeyed the summons.

"Where are you to take me, captain?"

"To the Bastille. I will depend upon your honor not to attempt to escape, and you shall not be bound."

"I agree, captain. Had you not better call a carriage? The people love me, and might not take it well to see me in the hands of the guards."

"That has been thought upon, monsieur. The carriage waits."

They found at the door one of the carriages used in conveying prisoners to and from the Bastille. The captain and his prisoner entered, the curtains were closed, and the carriage rolled away, through the darkening streets, to the gloomy portals of that strong tower which had heard the wail of suffering humanity so long, and which it remained for the genius of the French revolution to pull down.

Into the gloomy portal, through the dark passages, and into a narrow room, where rusted chains, dark walls, and the names of victims engraved on the walls, told a sad tale. Emile was followed by a turnkey and a prison-smith, who riveted a long chain upon his ankle, which allowed him to walk the length of his prison, although confined.

"For how long am I to stay here?" he said to the jailer.

"For life. Bid farewell to the outside world, and enter here until death releases you."

"Let me ask one question. Is Count Louis dead?"

"Yes; you have broken the line of a noble house. St. Verain might have had your life, but he knew what it is to pass a lifetime within these walls, and preferred that punishment. Ask me no more questions, for I will not answer them."

The door clanged, their footsteps sounded along the corridor, and Emile was alone in his prison.

In the Bastille for life! Death he had expected, for he had taken life, although in self-defense; but such a death as this—a death in life! He was young, and life just opening before him. The vision of life and beauty for whose sake he lay immured in that dungeon was continually before his eyes. Would he be able, by means of the money he had lent her, to reinstate herself in power, and in the favor of the king? If she did, it would be some alloy to his sufferings to know that he had fallen in behalf of a noble lady, who would bless him, and teach her children to bless him, though she never knew his fate.

Six months passed, and the jailers, as they came in to see the victim of the "Lettre de Cachet," saw that he was wasting fast, and could not last long in this imprisonment; and one rough jailer, touched by his sufferings, asked him if he had no friends outside, who might help him with the king.

The prisoner started, and drew the ring from his finger—the ring which the girl had given him. "Take this to Louis, Count de St. Verain, a Bastille prisoner by your order, sends you this. You need add nothing more, and if you bring me help, upon that day I will count you out twenty thousand francs."

The eyes of the man sparkled, and, seizing the ring, he hurried away. Emile knew that he had little to hope from Count de St. Verain, yet the lady had said: "Take this to Count de St. Verain, and he must help you." The day dragged on, and he began to despair. Better to die than endure this hourly agony. The jailer did not come back; doubtless had failed. Emile looked at a narrow bar of dull light which crossed the floor, and said: "When that touches the stone upon which the name of Duchein is written, all hope will be gone, and I will end my own life. I have the means."

In his hours of leisure he had worked a small piece of watch-work which had been left upon his person into a minute but sharp-pointed knife. He passed his hand over his neck, feeling for the jugular vein. "It is horrible to die," he murmured. "It is impossible to live."

The bar of light crept on imperceptibly, nearing the fatal stone, and Du Martin felt that his hour was drawing nigh. He drew out the little blade and tried it upon his finger, and a wan smile passed over his face as the light touched the stone.

"Now is the time!" he cried, aloud.

"Farewell, all I have loved, and may God forgive me for this last sin."

He raised his hand, and the keen point touched the skin; but, at that moment, he heard a door opened at the end of the long corridor, and hastily concealed the knife. He would wait until the turnkey had made his rounds, and was again gone. The steps

came near; a key was inserted in the huge lock; the bolts shot back, and there entered the jailer who had been his friend, and behind him a gray-haired, noble-looking man, with glittering orders on his breast. Next to him, her beautiful face suffused in tears, came the lady to whom he had lent the money.

"Count de St. Verain has received your message, my poor fellow," said the old man, "and has come to set you free. Unlock these fetters, by this order."

The smith came in, the fetters were stricken off, and the prisoner stood up; but, weakened by his sufferings, sunk upon his knee.

"Look to him!" cried the lady. "Oh, my God, he is dying!"

They lifted him in their arms and carried him to the infirmary, where for three days he lay between life and death. As he began to recover, he was conscious of an angel by his bed, and knew that the girl for whom he had suffered was not ungrateful. When he was recovered enough to move, she told him all the story, as he lay in luxurious ease upon a couch in the Hotel de St. Verain.

Her father had been stripped of his estates and titles through the machinations of a younger brother who had succeeded him in the favor of the king. It was the son of this brother who had fallen by his sword upon that unlucky day. By the aid of the money obtained from Emile, the true count had established his innocence, and his faithless brother was now an exile in a foreign land. Emile had been sought for in vain, for the "Lettre de Cachet" worked in secret, and it was only when the turnkey brought the ring that they became aware of his fate.

Emile Du Martin was a descendant of an old family, although he had adopted the cause of the people. It was not hard for a man of the popularity of the count to raise him in rank, so that he could, with propriety, wed the daughter of so distinguished a man; and on her wedding-day Helene wore upon her neck the jewels which had been the means of raising her to her ancient rank. The false count died in disgrace and poverty in Vienna, three years after the marriage had been celebrated in Notre Dame.

Taste.—A correct taste is ever the concomitant of a chaste mind; for, as a celebrated author has justly observed, "Our taste commonly declines with our merit." A correct taste is the offspring of all that is delicate in sentiment and just in conception; it softens the inflexibility of truth, and decks reason in the most persuasive garments.

My Brother's Wife.

BY REBECCA FORBES STURGIS.

We had never seen her while Harry was living, and now she announced her intention of being with us by the first of September.

"It is so very unhealthy in this hot East India climate," she wrote, "and poor, dear Harry was so anxious for me to become acquainted with his family, that I am coming."

We looked at one another when that missive was opened and read at the breakfast table.

"Let me see—Harry has been dead three months," my father said, sadly; and my mother responded with a sigh.

"Of course we must make her welcome," I observed, with an odd choking in my throat.

Harry had been my only brother. He was a precocious sort of a boy, and at an unusual early age he commenced to apply himself to business. Shortly after, he got a sort of a government commission to India, and remained there for the remainder of his lifetime.

He became rich, and then he married a young girl, a half East Indian, whose family, we were informed, were in every respect inferior to our own. But he sent us her picture, and wrote page after page of her goodness and beauty. Of course we could not demur. We had no right to say who or what Harry should marry. True, we thought of cousin Winnifred. Harry always had been more than cousinly in his attention to her, and yet, perhaps, he had not thought of the wrong he was doing her. Anyway, Winnifred drooped and faded when the news of Harry's marriage came to her, though she made no remark, or betrayed, save by her looks, that the inmost core of her heart had received an incurable wound.

I thought of all this, now that his wife, without him, was coming home to us, but I determined to be brave and just.

She came! She was the most peculiar, bewildering creature that I had ever met with. She had long, floating golden hair, and very black, dreamy, dove-like eyes. A being that seemed to resemble a butterfly and a humming-bird. She was a restless, and yet an indolent little thing. She was never still for two consecutive moments, but would not exert herself in the least. The little India girl she brought with her must

"We could not if we would," he replied, sadly. "She plainly intimated if I did not come to terms she would put it in a lawyer's hands. Of course I would not wish the affair to gain such notoriety."

The Hall was sold. We—mother, father and myself—took up our residence at a little villa that belonged to my mother, notwithstanding cousin Winnifred pleaded and urged us to come to her.

My brother's wife left us. The night before, a strange, tall, dark-hued man had arrived at the hotel, some two miles away, and she had met him. The landlord said they had gone away together, and it was not hard for us to infer that he was some lover who had followed her across the water.

Two months passed. One day, as I was sitting alone on the piazza, a strange, yet familiar form approached me. I sprang to my feet, and "Harry!" fell from my lips. When I became conscious again I was lying on the sofa, and my brother, not my brother's ghost, was beside me.

He told us his story.

His married life had not been agreeable as he had led us to suppose. Her pretty face and fascinating manner (for she was fascinating, I will admit) had carried him captive, and they were married after a very brief courtship. A few months later he learned that she had a lover, whose poverty had been the only barrier to their union, and for whom she still retained all her affection. That did not tend to make him happy, but they came to no open rupture.

One day he was out sailing, a native being with him, and the fellow upset the boat, caught him in his strong arms, and swam with him some distance to a sort of cave. There he was taken by two others, and kept prisoner. At last he escaped. He returned to the city to find that his business had most all been settled up by his wife, and that she had sailed for England. His first thought was to follow her, but, before the day came that the steamer sailed, he was stricken down with fever. For a long while his life was despaired of, but, in time, he rallied. He then wrote home to us, thinking we would get the letter before he would arrive; but, if it ever reached its destination, his cunning wife secured it at the office.

He had no doubt but that his wife contrived the plot against him, for the stranger was the description of her lover. She must have found that note, which Harry felt sure he had destroyed, among his papers, and so formed the plot to wrest it from our father.

Harry was a sad man. He had his business settled up in India—he could not think of returning there again—and opened another here. He bought back the Hall. He fast retrieved his lost wealth, but that could not obliterate the stain from his heart, or bring back happiness.

One day we read of a horrible rail-car disaster, and as one of Harry's friends was to have taken that train, he ran down to see if he was among the unfortunate. What was his horror! The first person his eye fell upon was the mangled remains of his unfaithful wife. He did not weep over her, as she, in all her glorious beauty, laid a corpse before him. He felt as if she was but the part of a dream that had long since faded away. He had her put in a coffin and interred. A plain stone, with the simple name, "Clarice," marks the spot. The beautiful East Indian girl is at rest.

One, two, three years passed. We look in again.

"My brother's wife," I say, but she is not the bright humming-bird I greeted first by that title. It is Winnifred, our cousin, his wife, looking better and purer for the long years which she waited with a famished heart.

Hoodwinked!

OR,
DEAD AND ALIVE.

A Tale of Man's Perfidy and Woman's Faith.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "RALPH HAMON, THE CHEMIST," "THE WARNING ARROW," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

JOE FLEET ON TRAIL.

THAT afternoon, when Pauline went out for her accustomed drive, leaving her husband and the physician discussing their villainy, she was not long without all desirable company for one occupying the position alone hers, but in the midst of the gay throng which filled the fine drives of Regent's Park she saw not the face and form of him who was ever uppermost in her thoughts. It was pleasant to be out in the open air, away from a home whose every association was so distasteful to her, and it was near night-fall when she ordered her coachman homeward. When she reached square St. James, the lamps before her own house had been lighted.

With a sense of loneliness and distress, she entered the gorgeous hall of her aristocratic home, and ascended the staircase, intending to retire to her boudoir. To reach her room it was necessary to pass those of her husband, and as she came to the door of the latter apartments, an animated dialogue within arrested her attention.

There was the voice of Lord Hallison Blair, and once in a while, that of Doctor Gulick Brandt; then there was another—coarse, rough, fierce, and vulgar in expression.

"There is registered there"—came to her ears, in the voice of her husband—"a young man who has registered himself 'Lord Victor Hassan B.'"

Victor Hassan! How the utterance of that name riveted her! She waited to hear more. What of Victor Hassan? Her heart was palpitating nervously, with a sudden excitement. For the first time in her life, Pauline played the eavesdropper. What brought Victor's name into the mouths of these men?

She drank in every word of their dialogue. Her face grew whiter and whiter, until it vied with the pallor of the driven snow. They were deliberately plotting a foul murder! And Victor to be their victim! Heavens! what did she hear? Was, then, the mask falling from the smooth-spoken man she called, unwillingly, her husband? Was she learning the true devilishness of his nature at last?

She was a listener to the whole diabolical plot and agreement entered into between the noble, the physician, and the bull-fighter!

When the interview was concluded, and the Spaniard arose to take his leave, she was surprised at the strength which enabled her to flee from the position near the door,



THE LETTRE DE CACHET.

and gain her apartment in time to prevent discovery.

A moment's delay, now, would result in murderous consequences. A life depended upon her calmness, her immediate action—a life precious to her, even beyond her own, and she prayed Heaven to endow her with power so to act that she might save Victor—save him, who was dearer than all things on earth.

A brief reflection suggested a course which, she felt assured, would prove successful. Without taking time to lay off her things—without noticing the staring maid, who wondered greatly at her mistress' agitation—without other thought than the object before her, Pauline opened her escritoire, took up a pen, and hastily wrote a line. Folding, enveloping, directing the epistle, she handed it to her maid and bade her dispatch a servant with it speedily, to its direction.

Then the time which followed seemed a tormenting delay. The waste of a single second might, perchance, result fatally, and he, Victor, would be sacrificed! The suspense was terrible, the fears excruciating, the situation well-nigh unbearable, and it required an almost superhuman effort to control her excitement and uneasiness.

At the moment when the note was delivered at the headquarters of the London police, there happened to be no member of the secret service on hand, and Joseph Fleet, returning from his interview with Calvert Herndon and Victor Hassan, being the first at the chief post, received the billet. As he have seen, he instantly betook himself to square St. James, to the residence of Lord Hallison Blair—was admitted—was ushered up-stairs to a private reception room, where Pauline awaited him.

"Lady Hallison Blair, I believe?" said Fleet, bowing politely, as he entered.

"Yes, enter, sir, if you please. What I have to communicate is private as well as important, which will excuse my inviting you to these rooms. Be seated."

"Oh, certainly," closing the door and doing as directed.

At the expiration of ten minutes detective Joe Fleet understood "exactly" and "precisely"—as he remarked—the business nature of his call. At the conclusion of her statements, he smiled meaningly, arched his eyebrows suspiciously, gave vent to a low whistle, and thought:

"Now, then, here's more complication! Lord Hallison Blair is going to have a young man kept; and that young man is a former lover of this young lady's, and this young lady is the wife of Lord Blair; and my lord is not the true lord; and he is a villain; and he has associated with him in his villainy one Gulick Brandt, M. D.; and, finally, I've gained a point—a heavy point; for now, I know that my lord is a rascal. Good! Things progressing at this rate will show me what to do next, after I've done something first."

"But," was Pauline's interruption to this mental summing, "I could not learn where Mr. Hassan was to be found. I know not what to do. I must trust to you, sir. You can, perhaps, find him—can you not?"

"Find him? Oh, yes. Not the least doubt of that," he returned, in a tone of confidence which caused her a glad thrill.

"Thank Heaven! I hope you are sure. When—when can you—"

"Now. Right away—in a minute—in two minutes—in a jiffy."

Pauline would have spoken further, but Fleet, fully recognizing the urgency of the case in hand, took his departure, saying:

"I'll fix this thing all right for you, Lady Blair—trust me for it," and in a moment, bowing, he quitted the room.

The detective hurried straightway to the hotel. He had not expected to return there so soon—in the same evening; but, with the new duty before him, of placing the young man on his guard against a second attempt upon his life, then pending, he entered the hotel, and continued up stairs.

He had reached the floor on which were the rooms of our friends, when he was checked by an unexpected sight. That part of the house was quiet and deserted, yet the detective saw something which caused him to halt, and to remain silent.

The suite engaged by the party of four was accessible through a narrow side passage, branching off from the main hall, and unlighted. There was a window at the opposite end to where Fleet stood, through which was dimly reflected the lights from the street without, and the pale stars.

But, faint though it was, it formed a background, against which was discernible the outline of a man. The detective saw that it was a man of heavy build, prodigious strength, and that he was enveloped in a long cloak.

He was leaning forward—was engaged in picking the lock of a door, and that the door to the room occupied by Victor Hassan as a sleeping apartment.

Fleet did not pause to ask himself who this could be, but concluded at once that his arrival was just in time to frustrate a murderous design.

Drawing back quickly in the recess of another door beside him, he took off his boots, and then he peered out, to see how far the would-be assassin had progressed in his labor.

The latter was no longer to be seen!

"Ah!" Fleet exclaimed, as he glided along the entry, noiseless as a cat, and reached the door where he had seen the man at work.

The door was open. Passing around the jamb, he saw the intruder standing in the center of the apartment, his back toward Fleet, his eyes bent upon a couch, whereon lay Victor, who had retired earlier than usual, and whose loud respiration at once told that he slept soundly.

The would-be assassin advanced step by step toward the bedside, concentrating his enormous strength to give the fatal blow. The shining steel raised and poised aloft.

"Thud!" something whizzed through the air, arrow-like, and with unerring precision, striking the wretch squarely upon the temple, causing him to stagger. Ere he could recover himself, there was a loud cry; he received another blow which felled him to the floor, and the cold muzzle of a pistol touched his temple.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TIGER PLAYS THE FOX.

WE left Diego Perez in a state of mental stupefaction, insensible to an immediate realization of the unaccountable change in Madge Marks, which transformed her from the culture to the dove. She protesting against the bargain entered into by the bull-fighter, to murder Lord Victor Hassan B. It was strange!

He looked at her searchingly, a frown

settled on his brow. What interest had she in the youth whose life he was to take? Why should she interfere in his plans? What had produced this change in her vicious nature?

"Look ye, Madge Marks," he cried, "what means this turn about? Are you mad? Then lie to Bedlam mad-house! Are you a fool? Then go to the asylum! I'll have none of this baby-talk. Were you of the old Garduna with me, you would get a bath* for your weak heart! Are you so good of a sudden that you do not fear being choked in the smoke?—or that you do not fear the jaws of the wolf? Bah! A grand serena you would make me!"

"Diego Perez," she screamed, "you must not do this deed. Mark what I say!—you must not do it. It is no business of yours what my reason; but you must give it up!"

"You rave, Madge Marks!" he exclaimed, with a growl; "how can I well hold back now, when I am part paid?"

"Give me your money. Give it back to him. You shall not fulfill your bargain if I can help it!"

"Poh!" he grunted.

Having finished his supper, the bull-fighter arose, slipped on his broad hat, and threw his cloak over his shoulders.

"Where do you go now?" questioned Madge.

"It is no business of yours. Keep your place," was the brief, surly reply; and, in a moment he had gone out; but the hag also left the miserable room, and followed close upon his footsteps.

Diego was in a disagreeable mood. He felt convinced that the face Marks appeared in this den, but the keeper knew him well, and was prompt to act so as to gain his good grace, considering the Spaniard's strength and friendship two valuable auxiliaries to the quietude of his house.

Diego Perez gulped down the sickening stuff, and having paid for it, turned to leave, when he was confronted by a face. It was a familiar face, with leering expression, with glaring eyes, Satanic in mold, disconcertingly awfully. The stained, withered lips were screwed up in a ghastly smile; the dark orbs flashed an unfinching stare; the owner stood there in a way that conveyed, clearly as words: "I am here!"

"Satan seize you, Madge Marks!" he cried, in an undertone, not caring that the few loiterers should catch his utterance. "What brings you upon my track?"

"You know well enough, Diego Perez," she answered, slowly, and in the same guarded tone: "I said you should not do this deed—and you shall not! I have sworn it!"

"Dios! what shall I do with you! Look at me. You see me? Do you read me? Am I to be turned aside by your crazy cackle? By the Pope's toe!—no! Then he appeared to have suddenly conceived an idea; for he continued, more mildly: "Come—drink—you have not drunk since yesterday, Madge Marks."

"No; I don't want any drink. If I muddle my brain you will clude me. Ha! ha! Diego, you can't beat me at a fair game!"

"Now, my good woman," said the bar-master, with an eye to business, "come, have a drink. It'll do ye good—put warmth in ye. Try a glass. There y' are, now," and he set another black bottle on the counter beside a dirty glass.

"Drink," urged Diego. "You are in a bad mood with yourself to refuse. Drink, I say, and then leave me to myself. Keep your peace."

She looked at the tempting bottle in a wistful way. Then, unable to resist her natural craving, hurriedly filled the glass, saying:

"Just one, Diego! just one, and no more!"

Her back was toward the bull-fighter, and the latter, with a quick motion, made a significant sign to the man behind the bar. The sign was answered by a knowing wink, and while Madge Marks was busy pouring alcohol down her insatiable throat, the Spaniard, without any noise, passed out through the door, and hastened along the street.

When Madge set down her glass, she turned to where Diego had been standing.

"H—a!" she screamed. "He has fooled me! He is gone!"

"Stop, Madge, stop," said the master, as she was about to dash away, and in accordance with the silent instructions he had received. "Stop. Have another drink. Here's the bottle. Help yourself."

She paused. She glanced first at the door, then at the black bottle. She had not tasted drink for many hours till now, nor was there other prospect of procuring any; for she had no money. The invitation was irresistible. She returned to the counter, drank again and copiously, and uttering an unintelligible ejaculation, bounded from the place in headlong pursuit of Diego.

But Madge Marks was completely foiled. Diego Perez knew that when she drank, she drank a great deal at a dose; he knew that one or two drinks would suffice to turn her brain and render her incapable of all self-control.

And he guessed correctly, for she had not walked a dozen rods before her vision grew hazy; she staggered blindly onward, forgetting Diego, his mission, her resolve to prevent it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MADGE ON HER KNEE.

"LORD HALLISON, will you answer an inquiry of mine?" said the doctor, after the bull-fighter had left the two conspirators on his mission of blood.

"Well," returned the Englishman, settling to a comfortable position in his chair, and lighting one of his favorite Havanas.

"Drowned. * Seized by the Law. * Prison. Terms in use among the Garduna of Spain, at the time when the Inquisition at Seville, was in the zenith of its power. Diego had, probably, ascertained them by accident, retained them in memory, and at this late day introduced them in his speech as more forcible than plain English."

"provided you don't search too deeply for information, yes. I will answer you. What is it?"

"I would like to know," continued Brandt, "why you became glibbed this afternoon, when I returned to you, and told you that Victor Hassan was at the Hotel?"

"Oh, pshaw! it was nothing. I was not agitated simply on account of the intelligence that he was there. But it was—it was—"

"Ah! it was something else? And what was it? Will you tell me?"

"Ay, a something far more important than the mere fact of his being so close upon our track caused the agitation to which you allude. I am greatly perplexed."

"Is it, then, a secret?"

"Yes, a secret."

"Yet you may safely intrust it with me. I only ask through curiosity—nothing more."

Lord Hallison Blair laid down his cigar, and frowned involuntarily as he gazed into his lap, appearing to reflect upon the propriety of granting Brandt's request.

The physician did not note the quick, sharp look that was darted at him as the other's eyes raised for a moment, and then dropped again, instantly.

Presently Blair said: "If I were to tell you this secret, you would probably use it against me." The tone was to probe the physician's eagerness or indifference.

"Is it so momentous?"

"Yes."

"You may rest assured I shall never betray it."

"And what security have I for this? You know, doctor, we are both liable to deceit if there is benefit to accrue."

"Then keep your secret. If it is of so great a value that you would hesitate to whisper it, even placing me on oath, I do not care much to know it. I should feel uncomfortable in my knowledge."

Another searching glance of only a second's duration, flashed, unseen by Brandt, from the eyes of the wary nobleman. Then Blair concluded, mentally:

"He does not seem anxious. He can not have a purpose of his own in seeking this. I do not fear the man! I do not think he will dare betray me. I might as well tell him. I may be wrong in so doing; but never mind." Looking up, he continued, aloud:

"Doctor Brandt, will you swear to secrecy?"

"Certainly; though, when I first asked you the question, I did not anticipate this phase."

When Blair had bound Doctor Gulick Brandt, by a most solemn oath, not to reveal that which was about to be made known to him, the former said:

"I'll now tell you, in a few words. It is this: *I am not the true heir to either the title or wealth of the deceased Lord Harold Blair, Earl of*—"

"Who, you know, was always thought to be my father."

Brandt made no remark, and the Englishman added:

"That is, I am of the candid opinion that the earl was *not* my father, for cogent reasons heretofore judiciously concealed."

"And from what do you derive this supposition?" asked the physician, during the brief pause that followed. "Besides, what has Victor Hassan to do with it?"

"Both of those inquiries I am about to explain. It is universally believed that I am the true son. The earl certainly died in that belief. I am recognized as Lord Harold's son and heir. But I doubt if I am entitled to my position. When you came back this afternoon from your half-fool's errand in pursuit of your enemy, what did you say? You said that it was the young man whom we thought dead, buried in the cellar of the Home Mansion, in America—"

"did you not?—or words to that effect?"

"I did."

"And what more? You said that he had registered under a fictitious name—'Lord Victor Hassan B.' Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"Now, see why I became suddenly excited," and as he spoke, he took off his coat, rolled up the shirt-sleeve of his right arm, and, raising it so as to expose the under part, held it to the physician's gaze. The latter saw, pricked there in India ink, each letter clearly defined: *Nor Victor Hassan B.*

"You see that, Doctor Brandt?"—re-arranging the sleeve. "I have an indistinct remembrance of once having been called Victor. It must have been very many years ago; but it is still in my mind. Besides this, just before the old earl died, when he had but a few moments to live—it was about ten years ago—I went to his bedside, and asked him *why* the name, 'Victor Hassan B.' was pricked upon my arm. He told me he had put it there, in my infancy, together with the coat of arms of his family. You noticed there was no coat of arms there; only the name. Then he told me of an estrangement which had arisen between him and my mother when I was only a babe, and which had blasted his whole remaining life, and so on. To that part I paid but little attention. And further, he said that my name had been changed when I was about four or five years old to Hallison. I was careful enough to prevent him, or anybody else, from seeing all that is pricked upon my arm; for this suspicion of mine has been of long existence. I asked him no more. Now, here is what makes me sure that I am not the son of the late Lord Harold Blair, Earl of —," saying which, he bared his left arm, and Gulick Brandt beheld thereon:

"Hallison Gregor!"

"You astonish me!" exclaimed the physician.

"Do I? Well, you see, this is why the name of Lord Victor Hassan B. coming from your lips, had such an effect upon me. I know that my name was, once, Victor Hassan Blair—I had it from the earl on his deathbed. When in America, though the name of Victor Hassan was familiar to me, it never struck me as being particularly significant. But now, when the name alters to *Lord Victor Hassan B.*, I confess it troubles me. What does the 'B.' signify? Is it not possible it may mean Blair? Then, taking up my view, there is a singular combination; for the name on my left arm is 'Gregor,' and perhaps my father's name was Gregor; therefore, might not the young man who is injudiciously following us be the true son of the earl?—having lately discovered his title, by accident, and intending to push a claim? Adding every thing up, the question I can not solve is, how came I where I am?"

"Assuredly, I—"

"I do not doubt myself but that all I say is highly probable. Now, what shall I infer?"

"I am at a loss—"

"Never mind—it matters little. Diego will attend to him—he will kill him! Do not forget your oath."

"Your secret is safe with me, Lord Hallison."

"I suppose so; only guard your tongue, or it may accidentally move in a speech that you may not control. But no more of this. Let us drop the subject."

"As you please. Though I presume I am at liberty to wonder inwardly, am I not?" meaningly, half-sarcastic; for he felt the sting of the bribe this man was wont to put, at fancy, upon his tongue and actions.

"You can use your mental faculties as you are minded," replied Blair, also significantly; "but, be sure you do not speak too many of your thoughts. What say you to a game of cards? I have no engagement at the 'club' this evening."

"With pleasure," and as the physician drew his chair nearer to the table, Lord Hallison Blair went to a small stand at one side, where he procured a small box containing a pack of elegantly glazed, elaborately stamped playing cards.

With this box he returned to the table, and was about to reset himself, when there sounded a loud commotion in the hall, and he paused, as heavy, shuffling footsteps approached along the entry.

The two exchanged glances, and the physician suggested:

"It is the Spaniard."

"Not so," returned Blair: "for it is not his step. Who can it be? If a visitor, it is strange that no servant has preceded, and announced to me the name!"

Their alternate inquiries were answered in a few seconds. The comer halted at the door, and, turning the knob with a twist and a wring, stood before them.

The first glance discovered that it was a woman; the second, that she was of disproportionate and masculine figure, with a visage of the devil, a glance of hate—an eye that leered, glared, flashed with hostile light—a general mien of disgusting front. Her long, thick, black, wiry hair was knotted and twined in disorder; her clothes were wet, muddy, dusty, dirty, torn—as if she had rolled, first in the gutter, then in an ash-heap, finally rending her garments, as a pastime. Her poise was unsteady, as if aboard a ship at sea; she caught hold upon the door-jamb for support; then, with a reel, she strode forward.

"Oh!" she cried, "how's this, now? Where've I (hic)—got to, eh? A nice house for Madge Marks—to—to come into! Ho!—(hic)—again! Now, who—where're you—re you?" pausing beside the Englishman, and looking him full in the face, her breath strongly perfumed by the bad whisky which she had swallowed.

Lord Hallison saw that she was drunk, and reckless; he knew who it was—the dare-devil Madge Marks—for he had seen her once before, in a similar condition. He flushed with anger at her unwelcome presence, and impudence in coming to his private apartments.

As he looked toward the door, he beheld several domestics, men and women, who had followed Madge, not daring to interfere with her, and now stood at the entrance, watching to see what their master would do.

His actions surprised them. Hastily stepping forward, he banged the door in their faces, and, whirling round upon Madge Marks, bellowed, rather than asked:

"Miserable being! what brought you here? Do you know where you are? This is my house."

"Know what? I am? I—(hic)—I don't know. May I catch me!—(hic)—where—where's Diego, eh? Where's he, I say?" assuming a manner both ludicrous and fierce.

The Englishman readily comprehended that trouble was imminent. It was unavoidable. He did not wish to call in the servants, and have them kick her from the house, because she might babble an important secret.

He left his position at the door, and advanced to a corner, near one of the windows, where he kept a heavy cane.

Madge Marks, though drunk, understood the movement; more—she felt that he would not hesitate to use the cane; more—she determined to commence the attack herself, and she did so, by venting a horrible oath, grasping up the card-box on the table, and hurling it, with terrific force, at the head of the nobleman.

Her aim was a blind one. He dodged the missile, which passed out through the window, like a shot, where the lid of the box slipped off. The cards scattered in the air, and fell in a shower upon detective Joseph Fleet, as he ascended the front steps, in answer to the note he had received from Lady Hallison Blair.

With another oath, a panther-like cry, a scream of a cornered beast, Madge Marks staggered toward Lord Blair, her great arms outstretched, her fists clenched like sledge-hammers; and in the same moment, Doctor Gulick Brandt sprang to the Englishman's assistance.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 59.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOVE IN THE FOREST.

WHEN the scout, Tom Smith, confident in his skill with the ancient weapon which Robin Hood made so famous, agreed to go forth in search of game, he was well aware that he was undertaking a difficult and arduous task. He knew, from many signs and tokens which he had observed during the day, that the forest abounded in deer, wild turkey, and a kind of pheasant very profitable and nutritious. He could not, however, venture down close to the lake after deer, nor could he very well roam the forest on the chance of falling in with birds.

His plan, then, was to use his great knowledge of the characteristics of the forest, in order to take up such a post as might, perchance, give him game to shoot at during the night, with the certainty of much more at daybreak.

His knowledge of the characteristics of the forest now became admirably useful. He could tell, from that intuitive knowledge which is given to the student in woodcraft after a time, in which direction to proceed; and for this purpose, having tightened his old moccasins, he was about to glide away

into the dark recesses of those black and gloomy woods, when Martha stood before him.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"Night-shootin'," he replied.

"Can I go with you? I can't sleep; I am anxious and ill. The walk will do me good, if I am not in your way."

"You kin never be in my way, Miss Martha," he gravely answered, "and I should be glad if you would come, only on the hunt it must be the less that is obedient—not the lad."

"I'll do everything you tell me," she said, archly, but submissively.

"Come on, then," replied Tom, who, truth to say, was more delighted than he could very well describe.

Now Tom might reasonably have been expected to return to the camp in triumph with sufficient game to supply the wants of all, had he been alone. But he was not alone; and, worse than that, he had made choice of the society of a woman—very pleasant and delightful companionship for a stroll beneath the greenwood trees, but a very undesirable partner in a serious hunting expedition.

Tom had selected a gully, partly denuded of trees, for his pathway toward an upland wood of oaks, which his quick eye and tried judgment told him would in all likelihood afford game in abundance. Though he had left his rifle at camp, he had not discarded his pistols, while a long, sharp knife also gave him the means of defense.

They reached the slope that led to where the hunter believed he might find game, though to Martha the whole expedition appeared a very blind one. At length they reached the confines of an opening, not a clearing, for though entirely without underbrush, yet was it perfectly lawn-like in its smoothness, and covered here and there by splendid oaks.

In deep shadow, where not even the prying eye of an Indian could have detected them, Tom seated himself.

He had noted as they advanced that Martha was silent, only answering his words occasionally, in monosyllables. She was very thoughtful and grave. Now, Tom Smith was quite a novice in the ways of women, but he knew that he loved Martha, and thought, not unreasonably, that if he could, by declaring his love, win her confidence, she might tell him what was the secret that so much oppressed her.

Now, however, that he sat close beside Martha, Tom, quite unexpectedly, found himself as silent as herself. The fact is, he felt a strange kind of embarrassment and hesitation as to how he should introduce the subject. Once or twice he hemmed to clear his throat, said a few unmeaning words, and again was silent.

Women are rarely quick in all that concerns their passions and desires. Martha knew quite well what was coming, and had she not been humiliated and sore at heart, she would have infinitely enjoyed her young lover's confusion. But, as nothing is so catching as that mental malady called embarrassment, she became embarrassed too, hesitated, paused, cast her eyes upon the ground, and left Tom to his own devices.

"I wish this here expedition was over," he said, very bluntly, at last, "that I do."

"Why?"

"Well, I reckon it's time I settled. I'm in and twenty this ere next September!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; it's a fact. But who the tarntion can think of settling when he's forever a-huntin' up scalps and buffaloes? I'm sick of solitary life—I am—thunder!"

"I suppose you would go down and pick up a settlement girl?" said Martha, quietly; "they're managers."

"Managers be hanged! No! I've long made up my mind—only, you see, Martha, it requires two minds to these things."

"Yes—of course."

"No, I've loved this here gal as don't love me, considerable months, and never said nothing."

"Do tell me."

"Now, really, truth, yer don't know her?"

"How should I?"

"Thunder! that's strange, now. I thought everybody'd."

"Well," said Martha, whose color had come bright upon her cheeks, though the darkness was such he could not see it, "there's only the two young ladies up in our parts. You haven't been a-falling in love with them?"

"Thunder!" said Tom, in a louder tone than was at all wise under the circumstances; "no; but I didn't think any woman was quite blind. Surely, Martha, you know I mean yourself."

"Myself?"

"Yes! There, now, it are out, and it's the real truth. And I tell you what, Martha; if you don't agree to have me, why, I'll

foolish idea was in my head, there came the moment when the master tone of the human heart was struck, and I began to know and feel, for the first time, what real love was. It flashed across me in all its brightness, in its overpowering strength—yes, it came—and the foolish fancy for the talking Bandit vanished into thin air before the voice of true affection.

"May I be so bold as to ask what the chap's name is, and so keep out of his way?" said Tom, in a husky tone.

"It wouldn't be easy for you to do that, dear Tom," she replied; "and I'm sure you don't want to."

"Do you really and truly mean me?"

"I do."

There were no more words, but there were equally demonstrative proofs of affection, and, for a good quarter of an hour, silence.

"And you forgive my folly?"

"For really and truly mean to be Mrs. Tom Smith?" he cried, with his strong arms round her waist.

"I do—"

"No 'if,' that's enough. That's subject's ventilated—so no more—let's shut."

It was time.

Dark, leaden clouds by this time covered three-quarters of the sky with a variety of fantastical forms, all hard and cutting at the edges, except where some lighter mass of grayish vapor floated over the general surface; over the lake could be seen one broad expanse of deep, lurid purple, with two or three streaks of fleecy white drawn across it.

"Lie close," said Tom; "I must be powerful quick; if the storm busts, it's all up with shootin'."

Martha crouched low, while Tom, taking a leaf, put it to his mouth, and imitated the cry of the doe so admirably as to quite startle the girl.

"That's the way you deceive the poor deer?" she observed, in a hushed whisper.

"All's fair in love, war and huntin'," grinned Tom; "but yer just look and don't talk, and you'll soon see some fun, or I'm a Dutchman of the Mohawk."

Again and again Tom imitated the cry of the doe, until he began to think he must move further, when a dry stick was heard cracking at no great distance.

Tom Smith prepared his bow and arrow.

"But it was too heavy for any light creature," whispered Martha; "it sounds like the tread of a man."

"No, Martha, dear; it was a buck. Look out yonder, where the light falls under the pine—thar he comes." As he spoke, a noble buck walked out of the thicket, and, advancing with stately step, looked round for the doe. Behind this splendid animal were others, all bucks, but evidently either more wary, or less amorous than the fine creature which greeted the hunter's view.

Again Tom, who was screened behind the oak-trunk, gave out his deceitful signal, which made the buck bend his head low to the ground, listening with deep attention, and then move closely and methodically across the lawn-like sward, followed, at a respectful distance, by his less lordly fellows.

Whizz—twang—and, leaping forward about a dozen paces, the buck fell on his knees, while two more, mortally wounded by two other shots, tried in vain to stagger away.

Then Tom rushed into the open space, and, with his long knife, put an end to their miseries.

Tom proceeded to cut up the deer, and hang it in quarters from boughs, out of reach of the wolves and other predatory animals, after which he again crossed the prairie with a view to reconnoiter. While engaged in conversation with Martha he had, to a certain extent, lost his way.

Now he neither wished to have half a dozen journeys between the camp and his game, which must betray their presence, nor did he wish to enter upon a wild-goose chase at night. It was important, then, to know the true direction of his companions, and this could only be done by catching a glimpse of the lake.

It was not difficult for him to do this, and, having discovered the sheet of water, he at once detected the gully by which he had come, and had made a sign to Martha, silent and obedient as an Indian squaw, to follow him, when a sudden and alarming sound came upon his ears.

Up that very gully he heard, distinctly the sound of a very heavy body of men silently threading their way through the woods, while voices as of men who knew themselves at home rose on the night air.

"Follow me, if you love your life," he said, and plunged into a dense thicket of young chestnuts, shoving aside the branches of the exuberant shoots carefully, until they both appeared safely screened from the sight of the enemy.

Tom had so arranged his cover that with little difficulty he could overlook the contingent, up which he now saw a whole cloud of dark and painted warriors coming, moving in the easy, careless way of denizens of safe territory.

"Oh, my poor venison!" said Tom, in a hushed whisper.

Now, had Tom said any thing about his head or his scalp, or the tortures he might have to suffer if captured, Martha in all likelihood would have been silent; but his doleful exclamation over his deer's meat quite upset her gravity, and she gave a smothered laugh, despite the fearful danger they were in.

"Snakes!" cried Tom. "What's up? That ere laugh of yours is mighty pooley; but lor, it mout cost our top-knots. This way!"

And using as much caution as a red-skin could have done, the young hunter began retreating, with his face to the enemy, holding poor terrified and alarmed Martha by the hand.

That the Indians had heard the laugh was evident, for they hushed their voices instantly, and then they could be heard running up the hill, and beating the bushes as if yet under the impression that it was some animal.

Then an ominous cry rose from amid the thicket of chestnut trees, proclaiming that the Indians had discovered the footsteps of human beings and of white men.

"That's just my luck," said Tom. "Cuss it, I never loved a woman afore; I never got nobody to love me afore; and now, just as I was going to be happy, them cusses come and stick their noses in the way!"

"What is to be done?"

"Well, you see, I've got these here two popguns—them's good for two lives, and maybe the rumpus may rouse the camp, in which case there'll be a rumpus—when it's as likely as not we two can vamoose."

"But may not all the objects of the expedition be lost?" asked Martha.

"Exactly," said Tom; "and I only mentioned it to show what might be done. Now I cave in to you, and this is my notion; let's run. Be mortal frightened, and when we get to a good locality, turn and surrender, bolt as brass. We've lost our way in the hills. I'm a young trapper—stole a girl for a wife, and ain't pertickler fond of getting into settlements again. You understand?"

"I do; but what will they do?"

"Well, they won't hurt you, and it's my opinion the worst thing they can put me to will be hoein' and workin'."

And with these words, clutching Martha's hand, he commenced a headlong career among the bushes, which soon brought a large party in pursuit.

When the Indians were close at hand, Tom suddenly folded his arms across his chest, leaned against a tree, and awaited the Shawnees. Martha cowered at his feet. In another minute they were surrounded by the whole party, who examined them with singular curiosity.

"What are you doing in our hills?" asked one of the chiefs.

"I am a pale-face, but my heart is red. I stole this girl from her parents, and have been wandering about two moons, in search of Theanderigo, the Black Hawk of the Shawnees."

"What has my brother done with his fire-bow?"

"Broken in a fight with a bear," said Tom, showing his collar of bear's claws, of which he was not a little proud; "but the pale-face warrior killed him."

"Wagh!" said the chief, admiringly.

A brief consultation was now held, after which it was announced to the young man that he would be taken prisoner with his wife into the camp, but without any indignity being offered, to await the decision of Theanderigo.

When, however, the village was reached, nothing was thought of but the joy of being reunited, and then of feasting, so that the young couple had a wigwam assigned to them, which Tom Smith entered with a comic and amused glance, while Martha did the same, half-terrified and alarmed, but with a radiant blush of outraged modesty that made her quite charming.

"Feels like home," said Tom, with a grin. "Most like husband and wife."

"Does it?" replied Martha, a little tartly.

"It may be to you, but I don't feel at all like home; and if you talk any nonsense to me, it's likely we never shall be husband and wife."

"It's only my fun," said Tom.

"How can you talk so," whispered Martha, shuddering, "when we are in the power of these wretches?"

"But so are Miss Ella and Miss Ettie," put in Tom Smith, thoughtfully.

"True; who knows but this may be the work of Providence to help us to see them?"

"I say, Martha," said Tom, "I'm powerful hungry and dry. These Indians are full of game; I'll go and get some."

With that Tom strode to a fire, where several of his captors sat. As he advanced, all were silent.

"My brothers have venison. The pale-face is hungry. He will give three deer to the feast if they will help him now."

"The meat is for all; eat. Where does my brother keep his deer?"

Tom minutely described the spot, and several boys and lads started to fetch the plunder, which when they returned with, the scout rose wonderfully high in their opinions. But Smith went away to his wigwam and supped with his wife, unconscious of his sudden glory.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

The captivity of Tom and Martha, while obliging the Avengers to be excessively cautious, made them, also, exceedingly anxious to discover the fate of the unlucky scout.

Victims not taken in war, were often either adopted into the tribe, treated as slaves, or kept for the torture. Both Kenewa and Steve were well aware that a festival of the Shawnees was near at hand, which, if the Indians were bent on any of their deviltries, they would be sure to indulge in them.

The want of provisions, too, was a very serious consideration, and must be obviated at any price, so that it was at last decided, that if the day brought forth nothing, the whole band should return to where the horses were hopped, and there remain until the moment came for daring and action.

This was the third day of semi-hunger and starvation.

It was, therefore, resolved that, as all this time the Shawnees had failed to track them, Steve and Kenewa should venture forth in search of game, as the sustenance of the party was becoming a question of serious consideration. Others would gladly have joined, but the fate of Tom Smith stood in the way, a warning to all to be advised by wiser men than themselves—wiser, be it understood, in that knowledge of woodcraft which, here, was more essential than any other form or kind of learning.

Steve and Kenewa understood one another, and, after a very brief conference, it was decided that they should both make, by different ways, for the lake, where the deer would be likely to congregate. Both had resolved, knowing the distance of the village, to risk a shot, hoping that the echoes of the hills would not betray them to their enemies. The remedy was desperate, it is true, but, under the circumstances, nothing else better could be devised.

When they started the day was hot, and it was, therefore, with something of a grateful sense of refreshment that Steve, as he descended the hill-side, found himself gradually penetrating the deep and tangled thicket, and the high wood that hung over his head and darkened the channel of the small stream that rippled through the valley.

His path lay along this stream, and he had frequently to cross its narrow fords, where the water fell from rock to rock in small cascades, presenting natural basins of the limpid flood, hemmed in with the laurel and the alder, and giving forth that gurgling, busy music which is one of the pleasantest sounds that can assuage the ear of a wearied and over-heated traveler.

Suddenly Steve halted. He was advancing to the northward, on the left bank of the stream, when he heard two sounds; that to his left appeared to be some animal making its way stealthily through the bushes, while that on the right might have been made by a man moving cautiously through the forest.

The latter sound, however, was not renewed, and the scout, therefore, bent his

whole energies to watch what he supposed would prove the game he was in search of.

Nor had he long to wait for a confirmation of his suspicions. The bushes moved, and, with an inward prayer that his gun might not betray him to his enemies, he let fly, and the deer rolled to the edge of the stream. In less time than it takes to describe, the hunter was upon the animal, and busily engaged in slaughtering and cutting it up, with all the art of an experienced butcher.

The whole animal was then strung on his shoulders, carried some distance toward the lake, and there hung upon a fir-tree, out of reach of the hungry wolves, who, scenting their prey afar off, are always ready to devour and destroy.

He then determined to make the best of his way down to the lake, hoping to meet with Kenewa, in whose company he would return, to console and refresh his comrades. It was at this moment that he missed the knife with which he cut up the deer. A red flush rose into the hunter's cheeks, already tamed by sun and wind, as he reflected on his own carelessness.

This knife had been his for twelve years, had his name on a plate let into its buck-horn handle, and he would not willingly have lost it for the price of a new rifle. With a muttered imprecation on his own folly, he clutched his firelock, and started on his way back, quite satisfied that, under any circumstances, he had left it where he had killed and cut up the deer.

He knew the way back well, and knew, also, that it was no great distance; therefore, after looking to the priming of his rifle, he turned his steps, and soon came in sight of the spot where lay the antlers, head, skin and offal of the deer, as yet untouched by the scavengers of the woods. Steve walked close up to the pile, looked carefully about, turned over the remains of the deer. No knife!

But, ere a moment had elapsed, the scout found that which he was not in search of—a foot-print on the bank, which was not his own—the foot-print of a large and coarsely made moccasin.

"Thunder!" muttered Steve, to himself, "if that ain't the mark of one of them thieving niggers, the Hornes, my eyes have quite lost their sight. Shouldn't wonder if the thief had got the knife, cuss him! I'll follow him, and, if I catches him, I expect he'd better look after his top-knot!"

While uttering these remarks, Steve was examining the ground, and soon found that the man, whoever he was, was now ascending the hill in the direction both of their own hiding-place and the Indian camp, having previously crossed the little stream exactly where the deer had been killed.

Steve then recollected the noise he had heard, and was only sorry that, in his anxiety to procure food for his companions, he had neglected the opportunity of punishing one of the accused Robbers of the Scioto.

He was now, however, on his track, and, such is human nature, in part impelled by the loss of his knife, Steve dashed up the hill at a rapid pace, forgetting for a moment that caution which was so essential a part of the stock-in-trade of a scout. Reason, however, soon resumed its sway, and ere ten minutes the ranger was the same calm, collected and calculating hunter that we have always known him.

By the time that Steve, following in the track of the bandit, had reached a kind of plain, or expanse of table land, about a couple of miles from the Indian village, and three from the encampment of the Avengers, the twilight was darkening in the west, and faintly stealing through tangled thickets and along lonely ridges. The ruddy light of evening, bursting from clouds of crimson and purple, and shooting down through gaps of the hills in cascades of fire, fell brightly and sweetly on the lake below, on the clumps of trees on the fairy river, winding along from side to side, now hiding beneath the shadow of the hills, now glancing into light.

Steve, still keeping his eye on the trail left by the robber, hurried onward, no sense of the hour, of fatigue, of hunger, or of thirst, checking his progress.

Suddenly he gave a quick, low, involuntary cry.

The robber's track changed all at once from the steady, heavy steps of a man pursuing his way on some purpose bent, to that of one who ran hither and thither as if in pursuit of some one.

A little foot, moccasin, but small and well-made, could now be seen commingling with that of the border ruffian.

"Tarnation snakes!" cried Steve, "surely he ain't found one of them gals, or Martha!"

But no time was to be wasted. Night was coming on quickly, and already many precious minutes had been lost. The trail was fearfully distinct, as, after a very short delay, he came to where the ruffian had come up to the ground. A fearful struggle had ensued, for all round a small open space the earth was trodden into; boughs had been snapped asunder, bushes broken, leaves scattered about, and every evidence given that one, probably the girl, had fought desperately in defense of her life and honor.

Steve clenched his teeth, and pursued his way.

But a silent horror fell upon his soul as now he saw that the footmarks were only those of one man, while after him he dragged something heavy; here, too, were evidences of violence and struggling; small boughs were torn down, as if grasped by some resisting wretch who was dragged forcibly along. The ground still showed the prints of feet.

Then came another green and grassy glade, where once more there were evidences of a struggle; where the small space of ground had been much trampled; where, amid the withered leaves, were signs of blood.

Steve looked fearfully about. The evening had been quite closed in, the darkening of the atmosphere, the hoarse sighs of the wind through the naked pine-trees, the rustling of the withered leaves which strewed the glades, gave a dismal sublimity to the scene.

Then came a low howl, as of dogs who have discovered something which induces them to moan and bay as if half terrified.

Steve looked up, and at no great distance saw the turkey-buzzards collecting on the tops of some trees close at hand. Advancing slowly, with a heart sick with horror—where women are concerned the tenderness of these men is almost incredible—Steve soon saw two small Indian dogs standing, pointing, as it were, at a low pool round which grew some reeds, while above were congregated, on a blasted pine, some half-dozen birds of ill omen, flapping their wings, and apparently ready for their horrid meal.

With three strides the brave hunter stood upon the margin of the pool, and saw—

Horror was depicted in his countenance, his cheeks were blanched, his eyes rolled in their sockets, his teeth chattered, while with difficulty he grasped the barrel of his rifle.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 55.)

Over the Falls.

BY CAPT. BRUN ADAMS.

LYING between the northernmost branch of the Rio Colorado—in fact, the head-waters of the stream—and the west branch of the Conchos, is one of the loveliest spots of prairie land that can be found throughout all that section, through which flows a yet smaller stream than either of those mentioned—that is, much narrower—but deep and swift as a mill-slucie.

It so happened that I was once "called" to go into this region, and, the country being strange, I met with the very great misfortune of becoming lost on the prairie.

All day, and far into the night, I wandered, giving my horse free rein, trusting rather to his instincts, than my own reasoning powers, to bring me out of the difficulty.

Just as the day was breaking, a glad neigh from my wearied mustang aroused me from a not very pleasant reverie, and, glancing up, I beheld the welcome sight of the roof of a cabin peeping above the undergrowth that had sprung up amid the larger trees in a "motte," or clump of timber, near the bank of a stream.

An elderly, grizzled and weather-beaten trapper made me welcome to his rude, though, to me, comfortable looking quarters, and, in the course of half an hour, after a substantial meal, I was shown a pile of skins upon which to rest and sleep, after my long and trying journey.

It was late in the afternoon when I awoke, and, on going out in front, I found my old friend seated upon a stump, busily preparing a lot of skins for curing.

Leaving him so engaged, I wandered off down the stream, noting the singular force and rapidity of the current, and, presently, came to where the entire body of water took a bold leap over a precipice of fifty or more feet in height, falling into a deep, dark pool, with a sullen roar, far beneath.

In all my wanderings throughout that country, I had never come across so singular an occurrence as a prairie stream possessing such a waterfall as that.

Retracing my steps, I found the old hunter still engaged at his work upon the pelts. I spoke of the falls, and instantly I saw the old fellow's eye brighten, as he replied:

"Yes, they ar' sorter cur'os, an' a ugly looking place fur a feller to drop over. Don't 'ee think?"

I assured him I did think so, and he continued:

"Well, y'ung man, dangerous as them falls looks, I knows a feller as went over 'em, an' he's a-livin' an' kickin' yit."

"Went over those falls, and is alive?" I exclaimed, instantly reverting in my mind to the fearful light and boiling caldron beneath.

"Yes, s'ee! An', what's more, he warn't hurt none to speak on, thet ar' by ther tumble, but he war wounded monst'rously afore he started."

"Tell yer about it? Sartinly, if you like. Sit down hyar on the chunk, an' I'll tell you the yarn."

"The man kin into these parts more'n ten years ago, an' built a ranch over yander whar you see the timmer lyin' jess along the edge uv the prairie. The Injuns routed him from thar, an' then he kin over hyar, an' built a cabin right whar you see thet 'un standin'."

"One night, it war jess afore mornin', the Comanch' surrounded it, an' begun batterin' in the door, an' by and by they stuck a chunk unnerneath the corner, an' purty soon the logs were all aback."

"Things got hot, too hot fur the settler to stay inside, so he throwed one uv the varmints in his tracks, loaded up ag'in, throwed the door open, an' jumped out, right smack inter the middle uv the howlin' devils."

"They war took mighty by surprise. An' afore they recovered, he had downed another, an' gruppin' a young warrior by the middle, he jumped into the creek, jess thar whar the big tree ar' standin', and away him an' the red-skin started fur eternity, what lay down at the bottom uv thet hole whar the water tumbles."

"The Comanch' opened on him with thar rifles, not mindin' thar comrade a bit more'n ef he warn't thar, an' the imps managed to kill the red-skin an' put a bullet inter the hunter's shoulders afore they got done thar foolishness."

"Nigher and nigher to the falls they went, an' purty soon the edge war re'ched, an' over they went, the dead Injun an' the livin' white man. 'Twur dead, either way, he thought."

"Ef the red-skins ketched him he war a goner. Ef he got to the bank an' made a break fur it, thar rifles'd finish the bizness, an' ef he went over, he went to his death."

"But, he hed a chance, the last way, an' he took it."

"As they war swept over the fall, the white man shifted the dead Injun in front, an' in thet fix, the red nigger under, they struck the water at the bottom."

"The jar war awful. I thought it would 'a' busted me wide open, but it didn't, an' I hed life enuff left to crawl under a shelvin' rock, an' lay thar till the Comanch' war gone."

"Then it was you?" I exclaimed, in amazement.

"It warn't nothin' else," was the cool response, and he went back to fixing the pelts.

A Narrow Escape.—An Englishman in Paris had a narrow escape a short time ago from a frightful death. Tranquilly contemplating the city from the top of the Vendome column, he did not notice a man, seemingly peaceable enough, standing close behind him. Suddenly the fellow started forward, clasped the Englishman round the waist, and exclaimed: "I bet I throw you down, as sure as one and one make two."

The Englishman, looking at him, and finding out that he had to deal with a madman, with admirable presence of mind, replied, at the same time tightening his grasp on the balustrade, "If you come below with me, I bet I can throw you up here, as sure as one and one makes two."

Tempted by the difficulty of the proposition, the man let go his hold, and accompanied the Englishman down-stairs, where he was immediately secured and handed over to the proper authorities.

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"THE AMERICAN PIANO,"

DOANE, WING & CUSHING,

A HUMOROUS MAN.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

There was a man in our town
With such a merry soul,
He never did a thing but laugh,
He was so wondrous droll,
He laughed at funerals and fairs—
At all things said or done.
I wrote a witty poem once
And gave him in a crowd
While he was in a jolly mood,
And laughing long and loud,
He read the first verse over twice,
His face got out of joint.
He turned to me and said, "Young man,
I'd like to see the point."
The second made him serious;
His under lip drooped down;
He read it over once again,
And then began to frown.
Right earnestly he read the third,
And looked around and swore,
And then put on his spectacles
And read it through once more.
The fourth verse troubled him to read;
He heaved a long-drawn sigh;
The fifth brought misery to his face,
And tears-drops to his eye.
The sixth verse overcame him quite,
His tender heart it broke;
He looked in agony around
And fell beneath the stroke;
But ere he died he looked at me,
And these words heebly spoke:
"Young man, don't put a joke in rhyme
Until you've got the joke."
We buried him with trembling hands,
And sadly weeping eyes;
And I'll long remember him—though I've
Forgotten his advice.

Bound to a Log.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

Three men were sitting around a tiny fire, built in a small hut that nestled far down amidst tall, towering cliffs and mountains. Built beneath the low-hanging boughs of a wide-spreading live-oak, of brush and dead wood, the rude cabin seemed, from a short distance, part and parcel of the tree. From the hill heights, the dense foliage screened the hut from view. From the valley alone could it be seen, and, even then, might well have been mistaken for a brush-heap or wind-fall.

This lone hut had, as stated, three occupants, all of the masculine gender. Though comrades, and apparently friends, there was a great dissimilarity in the trio. One, young, handsome, of pleasing countenance and symmetrical form, whose language denoted an educated man. This was Clyde Owens.

One, of heavy, massive build, with bull neck and head—a face bearing the unmistakable imprints of vice and dissipation. This was Jared Clark.

The other, tall and sinewy, though with angular, bony frame. A long, half-peevish face, small blue eyes, sandy hair and beard. A man easily led, by those of more decisive character, to do either good or evil deeds. One of those persons so aptly described as "nobody's enemy but their own."

Such was Obed Scranton. "Twas a lucky stroke, that one of yours, Jared," said Clyde, as the trio turned from their rude meal, and, igniting their well-blackened pipes, sat in comfortable positions before the fire, whose grateful warmth filled the hut. "It will make our fortunes."

"Thar's mighty little fer three men," growled the swarthy Hercules, an ugly glare in his treacherous black eyes, as he stared, moodily, into the fire.

"A good deal, I should say. You found the 'pocket' yesterday morning. Since then we have taken out over one hundred and fifty pounds weight, and no sign of its failing yet. Twenty thousand, at least, and plenty more where it came from."

"Good 'nough fer one—not fer three."

"What do you mean, Clark? You remember our agreement? Share and share alike!"

"It was a fool piece o' business, my makin' it. Ef I hedn't, I'd 'a' bin a rich man, now!" growled the miner.

"If you had not, you would never have found the pocket. You would have starved to death, man."

"I know you helped me a little when I was down 'afer the tussle 'th the grizzly, but it don't look 'overly right, Clyde Owens, to be a-pokin' it in a feller's teeth every minnit."

"Come, boys, I reckon it's time to turn in. We must work like blazes on'tel we get that pocket clared out. No tellin' who might chance along, and then the whole country would be crowded from the lower mines," said Scranton, with an uneasy look at Clark.

"You're right, Obe," said Clyde, knocking the ashes from his pipe, and arising. "You're not mad, Jared?"

"A low growl was the only answer, and the sullen miner roughly shook off the hand that rested lightly upon his shoulder.

"Good-night, then, and I hope you will wake up in the morning in a better humor, Clark," laughed the young man, as he spread his blanket, and, lying down, feet toward the fire, rolled himself up, and closed his eyes.

A smile of contented joy rested upon his face, and pleasant visions filled his mind. A dainty little form seemed before him, and loving words upon her lips. The vision of the true-hearted girl who was, patiently as might be, awaiting his coming home from the land of gold.

His mind filled with joyous plans for the future, that now seemed very bright, Clyde fell asleep, little dreaming of the fearful peril that threatened him so near.

The forms of the two miners still crouched by the dying fire, that revealed the interior of the hut, but indistinctly. Occasionally a glance would pass between them, full of a deep and deadly meaning.

Those of Clark were dark and vindictive, those of Scranton were hesitating and remorseful. His heart was evidently not as hardened as that of his comrade.

"He's asleep."

"Yes. But must we do it, Clark? Won't you give it up?" returned Obed, in a wistful tone.

"You're a fool, man! What right has he to what I find? It will be full twenty thousand apiece. Shall he hev it? No! It's our'n—he's got no right to it."

"As much so as I have. You might as well say that to me."

"But, you're a decent feller, an' he ain't. I like you—I don't him," muttered the miner; but there was an evil look in his down-cast eyes, that belied his words.

Had Scranton caught it, he would have trembled. It would have told him that his life, also, was in danger.

"I can't do it, Clark—don't ask me!" muttered Obed, the drops of perspiration standing thick upon his brow.

"You must—you hev sw'ared to do it. You won't back out now? Go, git the cords. You know me. Ef you crawfish now—" and there was a meaning expression in the glowing eyes, that caused the weaker minded man to shudder, as he turned away to obey.

His soul revolted at the part he was about to play, but his will could not resist that of Clark. He was fully under the other's influence, and could not break the bonds.

Scranton noiselessly left the hut, and speedily returned, bearing long strips of twisted deer-skin, that had evidently been prepared for the case. Then the Herculean miner arose.

"Now, tie him—I'll hold the cuss!" he growled, as he sprung upon the sleeping man.

Clyde, taken by surprise, offered but little resistance, and ere he comprehended the situation, he was firmly bound, hand and foot.

Then Clark arose, and drawing a knife, would have sheathed it in the prisoner's bosom, had not his hand been stayed by the grasp of Scranton.

"What do you mean, cuss ye?" he snarled, ferociously.

"Not that, Jared—don't kill him. Do as you promised, or you must fight me, too," was the low but firm reply.

Clark glared at him in wondering astonishment. Was this the phant tool he had known? This man whose eye glittered steadily, and whose hand rested upon his knife?

"Clark—Obed, what does this mean?" cried Clyde, in surprise.

"Jest this, my boy. You're in our way, an' as you didn't know enough to git outen it o' your own accord, we're goin' to help ye," grinned the ruffian Clark.

"For what? How have I injured you? What have I done to deserve this?"

"Nothin' much; on'y Obe 'nd me thinks as how there'll be more ef we on'y hev two to shar' in the pocket. So we 'tend to put you out o' the way."

"You will not murder me? You're only joking, Clark!"

"Am I? A sober bit o' fun this is, as you 'll find. But we won't murder you—thank Obe fer that. I'd 'a' done it, on'y he would n't hear to it. We'll jest take you to the water an' set you adrift. Sorter ship you back to the gal whose pictur' I seed' you kiss t'other day."

For a moment Clyde was speechless. He could not believe that they were in earnest. But then he realized his danger, and begged for mercy.

It was hard that he should die thus. Life was sweet as he thought of Mary Cravens. He could not die!

But Clark, with a bitter oath, rudely thrust a piece of skin into his mouth, and bound it there. Then the two plotters lay down to rest. Clark slept peacefully, but Scranton could not. It seemed as though he would never know rest again.

When day dawned, the miner was perched upon his own mule, and the party started for the shore of the ocean, that was but a few miles distant. Reaching it, near Umpqua Head, they found the trunk of a dead cedar-tree, and upon this Clyde Owens was bound.

The weight was too great for the miners to lift, and picking up a heavy stick, Clark used it as a lever, and rolled the tree to the water's edge. Then, with a fiendish laugh, he shoved the log out into the curling waves.

Bound and gagged, the miner floated off, his features distorted and his eyes fixed agonizingly upon the blue heavens above. The waves dashed against and over his helpless form; he believed he was doomed to suffer a horrible death, beyond a doubt.

"My God! Clark, must we let him die this way? It ain't too late—let me save him!" gasped Scranton.

"No ye don't! He's got to die! You offer to do it, an' I'll send you to keep him company!"

Obed nervously fingered the lock of his ride.

"Think better of it, Jared. Let's give him his life if he'll promise to go 'way and not trouble us no more. He'll do it—I know he will!"

"Yes—an' then set the hull kentry on us. No, no; I tell you he must die!"

"And I tell you that he must not! If you won't save him, I will!"

"Yes—I will."

"Then, cuss ye, you'll go, too! I meant it from the fust, but wanted to git meant more work outen ye!" snarled Clark, and raising his heavy club, he dealt a furious blow at his comrade's head.

It was only partially eluded, and the heavy stick struck the shoulder of Scranton. But he was not disabled, and, springing back a pace, he leveled his rifle.

Clark uttered a hoarse yell and sprung forward. The muzzle struck him full in the face as the trigger was pulled.

A smothered report followed, and as the

hot blood spouted into Scranton's face, Clark fell to the ground a dead man, his skull literally blown to atoms.

Without a second glance at the corpse, Scranton plunged into the water, and swimming strongly, reached the floating log. By great exertion he hauled it ashore, and soon restored Clyde to consciousness.

Then he told his story, and Owens, seeing that he was truly penitent, forgave him the wrong. Together they returned, and worked out the pocket, receiving enough to render them independent for life.

Then Clyde returned to the maiden who had so faithfully awaited his coming, and reunited, they were happy. Perhaps the only thing of his mining life that he concealed from her was his being "BOUND TO A LOG."

Camp-Fire Yarns.

Rube's "White Hoss uv the Perairys."

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

"Thar has been more'n twenty White Hosses uv the Perairy," said old Rube, in reply to my question if he had ever come across the famous "White Steed of the Prairies."

"Yes, more'n twenty uv 'em: all uv 'em jess alike as two bullets, an' the hull uv 'em able to outravel a streak o' greased lightning!" Pish! Thar hain't no sech thing! Thar's white hosses, though they're sca'ce, but they ain't no better ner wuss'n the balance. But I'll tell yur 'bout a white critter, he wur a stud, thet run on the upper ranges east'ard uv the Mimbrs, thet war a won'erful beast, an' no mistake, an' I tell yur, he led menny a good mount'in-man a fool's chase over them perairys."

"Durin' the fust Californy fever, when it did look es ef the hull face uv the siml war travlin' to the gold-diggins, thar kem along a emigrant train, long wif which thar wur a young Englisher from t'other side uv the water."

"He'd fetched from home a white hoss, as had some sort uv blood into him thet wur mighty unkimmon—"

"Arabian," I suggested.

"That's the sort! Yes, he sed it wur

about, we leff, strikin' out to'ard the west fork, whar we hoped to find the Injuns hed crossed an' clard out.

"The Englisher begged hard to go along, but es I wur skerry about his doin' some foolishness thet'd cost the hull uv us our ha'r, I respectfully declined, an' tole him to stay in camp an' let the white hoss rest fur thet day ennyhow."

"Well, shore enough, we did strike the Injun trail at the fork, but, es soon es Frenchy seen it, he sed right away thet thar hadn't more'n half the band gone over."

"Thet looked ugly; 'sides which, thar trail wur so broad an' plain, thet we knowed right away the imps hed left it so a-purpose."

"They're arter thet train, Rube, sartin es death," sez Dubois. 'Half uv 'em hev gone over, an' they'll scout round thet big timmer yander an' cross back ag'in, see ef they don't."

"A blind man could 'a' diskivered that Frenchy war right, an' back we put, es hard es we could pelt, hopin' ter git in afore the red-skins could git amongst the wagons."

"The kentry over which we had kem warn't all perairy. Thar wur motts uv timmer scattered all about, an', in one place, thar wur a right smart chance uv hilly ground, an' 'longside uv it wur a heavy belt o' timmer growin', whar a leetle crick mew-andered along."

"We hed 'a'most re'ched the broken groun', when, all of a sudden, thar bu'st out ther awfulest yellin' an' howlin', an' out from a gully, steeven tew uv the hills, lep the white hoss, the Englisher stickin' to the critter's back, and wobbilin' about in the saddle, es ef he were weak-like. Directly ahind the hoss kem half a dozen Injuns, while out in the level, to cut off his road that a-way, wur about twenty more."

"I see, in a minit, thet the chap hed been wounded, an' bad, too, for thar wur, atleast count, four or five arrers stickin' into his unfortunate karkidge."

"I tell you, it wur hard work to hev to lay still in the chapparal, an' see them varmints raise the ha'r uv thet young feller. But, what could we tew do? Thory ag'in, three, an' one o' them 'bout gone under, yur ruther heffy odds, an', as me an' Frenchy didn't want jess then to hev our float-sticks cut adrift, we hugged the groun', and didn't say nothin'."

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rid uv the saddle an' bridle an' halter, I don't know—but he did; fur he war seen afterwards cavortin' about over the perairys jess like es ef he'd been usen to 'em all his life. It ar' quare, but the fout wif the Injuns an' the loss uv his master seemed to 'a' sot the critter wild, and he stayed that a-way fur nigh two year, an' then he got tired of it, an' give himself up to a emigrant train.

"Thet's the en'y White Hoss of the Perairys that I know uv."

Beat Time's Notes.

WHEN a man is not himself, I would like to know who he is.

FLIES will soon be the order of the day, for soda-fountains begin to flourish. A fly of the blue-bottle kind is the best.

YOU never know what a noble specimen of humanity a man is until he runs for an office, and then you can not doubt it, for you have it from his own lips—often.

If you are riding along in a buggy, and you see your horse is about to kick, you can prevent him doing so by jumping out and tying his heels to the fence with a good rope.

A NEW way to pay old debts: pay them off and let them go.

WHEN you see a postscript, you may be sure it is the most important thing in the whole letter, having been forgotten till the last moment.

A LANDLORD is relatively well off when he has ten-ants.

TRUE politeness consists in making people believe you are a gentleman, whether you are or not.